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## JUDGE OR JUDAS ?



*By the Same Author :*

ONIONS & OPINIONS

CHURCHILL'S BLIND-SPOT : INDIA

*ETC.*

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# JUDGE OR JUDAS?

BY  
N. G. JOG

*Rs. 7-14*



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*For Lilo*

*&*

*“ Our American Friends ”*

( See Chapter IV )

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## FOREWORD

THE Judge in this book is Beverley Nichols, who delivered the *Verdict On India*.

Judas is, of course, Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver.

The title *Judge Or Judas ?* may be objected to as being an insult to—Judas ! After all, he was one of the twelve chosen disciples of Christ.

But then Nichols, too, professed to be a great evangelist not so long ago. In *The Fool Hath Said* he presented himself as a twentieth century apostle of Christ. He put across Jesus as a publicity agent would a new brand of soap : *He washes all your sins !*

Nichols ostensibly surrendered himself completely to Jesus. He humanized Him ; he modernized Him to the spring style of 1936, when that book was published. He was so thorough a pacifist and Christian then that he offered the African Colonies to the Nazis, a slice of Australia to Japan, and himself partly to the Oxford Group and partly to Oswald Mosley, the British Fascist leader. He ended that book with the stirring cry *Come, Come And Pray . . .*

Seven years later Beverley Nichols came to India—not to pray to Christ but . . . you will see that for yourselves.

N. G. J.



## CHAPTER I

### BEVERLEY NICHOLS ARRIVES

IN the year 1943 India was visited by Famine, Pestilence and Beverley Nichols. The former two are proverbially known as the camp-followers of war. Though he long paraded as a pacifist and a sort of Christian evangelist, and wrote a couple of best-sellers on the stupidity and horror of organized mass murder, Nichols also can be included in the same category.

When the second world war began, a number of English intellectuals shook off the dust of Britain from their feet and made a bee-line for Hollywood, Honolulu or wherever they could do their lotus-eating and star-gazing in peace. Their refined spirits could not stand the madness of another Armageddon, not to mention the bombing and the food-shortage and the nights in stuffy basements. Their escapism was as much physical as psychological.

Nichols did not, however, run away from the war in spite of his anti-war views. He reconciled himself to the inevitable and suffered the hardships and privations of war-time Britain for more than three years. And when at last he did take an opportunity to escape, it was only in order to stage a literary come-back.

While men like Auden, Isherwood and Aldous Huxley resolutely locked and barricaded themselves



in their ivory towers, the smart and publicity conscious Nichols ostentatiously devoted himself for more than a year to an intensive study of India. Now this is an entirely laudable enterprise and foreigners have been studying India for more than two thousand years now. From the all-conquering Greek king Alexander (327 B.C.) to the all-knowing American spinster Katherine Mayo (1926 A.D.), tourists of various types and from various countries have sojourned amongst us and left the record of their impressions for posterity.

What distinguishes Nichols from his peripatetic predecessors is the setting of his visit. Surely no normal Englishman would have felt himself impelled to delve into the mysteries of Indian aphrodisiacs, or to decipher the intricacies of Indian music at a time when his country was in the thick of a life-and-death struggle, and when England expected every man to do his duty.

One would have thought that as accomplished an author as Nichols would have been fully occupied in 1943 in useful national service. He could have enlisted himself in the fighting forces and shed his blood for God, King and Country. He could have become a Home Guard or a fire-watcher. He could have dug, sewed, knit for victory. He could have at least stuck to his last and helped to maintain national morale by his sagas on gardens, roses and cats.

Alas ! From 1940 onwards roses did not evoke the same emotions in an Englishman's breast though they smelt sweet as before. He was more interested in

raising a crop of beans or potatoes than in tending roses or in reading Nichols's perpetual panegyrics over them. Pacifism, the Oxford Movement, the papier-mache characters which were the favourite creations of authors like Nichols—all had lost their appeal.

The mood of England had changed. Blood, toil, tears and sweat marked the new order. It was no longer fashionable to flirt with the Fascists, or to bait the Reds. The values of life had changed. Democracy and freedom had taken on a new meaning—a personal meaning—in the life of the people, and each one was determined to fight for these ideals to the bitter end. It was a Britain of he-men and she-women and Nichols apparently could not find a place in it. All the glittering idols he had worshipped since his precocious school-days had proved to be fakes. The prodigy who had celebrated his birthdays with bestsellers suddenly found that the fountain of his inspiration had run dry. There was not even Page Two of *The Sunday Chronicle* to splash Nichols across seven columns. Paper had become scarce and editors and publishers asked for more meat than sauce.

Nichols could perhaps pay another visit to the United States and let himself go again in the star-spangled manner. But the Yankees were becoming rudely critical of Englishmen who crossed the Atlantic to escape Hitler's bombs. They despised them as cissies and openly derided them. An author's royalties in the States were sure to be affected if the Americans considered him to be a shirker masquerading as a

pacifist, unconscientious objector, hot gossamer of Christ, or merely a literary playboy on the loose.

By the end of 1941 America herself was neck-deep in the war and she was in no mood for the flippancies of a Beverley Nichols or even the extravaganzas of a Noel Coward. Park Avenue and Manhattan may have once been amused by their decadent wit. But in 1943 American gentlemen did not prefer blondes, or authors who traded in blondes either. They preferred to put on khaki and go to war for freedom, democracy and Pearl Harbour.

## II

Unfortunately fighting was not Nichols's *métier*. In the first world war he was too young to go on active service and apparently he considered himself too old to do so in the second, though he was barely in his forties. In the years in between he was, of course, a fiery pacifist. Perhaps he was constitutionally incapable of hating the Germans and Italians for whom he had expressed sympathy so often. And hate, as the Russians will tell you, is a condition precedent for all-out resistance, national as well as individual.

It would somewhat embarrass Nichols to refer to the Russians, for he had never any love lost for them. Like all Mayfair darlings he took every opportunity in the piping years of the armistice between the two wars to sneer at Stalin, Soviet Russia, and communism in general. He once wrote of the women members of the British Communist Party: "The young women

have, obviously, never known love. They have embraced Russia in a sort of frenzy of sexual repression.”<sup>1</sup> In the year 1943 it would be worse than foolish to write another such ‘Study in Red,’ for it was the Red Army which was bearing the main burden of fighting the Nazis and making the world safe for fragile spirits like Nichols.

The distinguished author of *Twenty-five* thus found himself at a dead-end at forty. Hitler had cried *Havoc* and let slip the dogs of war. Nichols’s familiar world of debutantes and duchesses, of pacifism and Christian frenzy, of cocktails and small talk had crashed around his ears. His roses had lost their fragrance and his beautiful garden was turned into a drab vegetable patch. The city no longer grew green. Even the Oxford Group which Nichols had glorified in a book with the (apposite) title *The Fool Hath Said* had petered out, and it was no longer fashionable to confess one’s sins—real or wishful—before a rapturous congregation.

The Bright Young Person asked himself in some apprehension whether he was not becoming a tiresome old bore, if not a back number altogether! Since 1941 he had not published a single book and authors like politicians are doomed if they are not constantly in the limelight. A fickle public forgets them quickly. Seasoned politicians even invite abuse in order to find their names in the headlines, while seasoned authors themselves abuse somebody or something for the same reason.

It was Bernard Shaw who first used such shock

<sup>1</sup> *News of England*, p. 128.

tactics. In fairness to him it must be said that mostly he abused his own countrymen, who were too phlegmatic to be shocked anyway. Subsequently he no doubt levelled his shafts in an increasing measure against the Americans, but then, he blandly explained, it was a sort of co-prosperity scheme: the more he abused the Yankees, the more they liked it and the more books of his they purchased!

Nichols can hardly lay claim to Shaw's prophetic vision or to his passion for social justice. Early in his literary career, however, he had learnt a few of Shaw's trade tricks. He knew how to titillate if not shock his readers. He knew how to amuse by abuse while Shaw's aim is always to provoke people into shedding their complacency. One can imagine G.B.S. bursting out into a loud guffaw when writing *Finis* to a volume, as if to say what fun it was—abuse and all! While laying down his pen, Nichols appears to be straining his ears for the cry of *Author—Author!*

### III

Was it merely in order to get back into the literary limelight that Nichols visited India? Or was there a deeper motive underlying his trip? He might have been fed up with the boredom and the bombing and the altogether bloody business of war. What Winston Churchill called Britain's finest hour had struck no responsive chord in him. When Britain was throwing up heroes by the thousand, this literary celebrity threw up the sponge and escaped to India. Amidst

all her poverty India remains the escapist's paradise, provided the escapist has a white skin.

Thoreau has observed somewhere that it is not worthwhile going round the world to count the cats in Zanzibar. Nichols found it worthwhile nevertheless to leave Britain in her hour of peril and to travel ten thousand miles in order to count the tuberculosis patients in Peshawar and the diseased cattle which Gandhi does not kill, not to talk of the gods and goddesses in the Hindu pantheon. There is no accounting for tastes, but Nichols's tastes have often appeared incongruous and inexplicable even to his admirers.

Why, in the year 1943, when the tide of totalitarianism threatened to engulf the whole world and when every pair of hands was needed to dam it, when the Nazi legions were goose-stepping on the Caucasus and the Rising Sun had cast its evil shadows from Calcutta to Canberra, why should a famous British author travel all the way to this country at such a critical juncture in the world's history and coolly indulge in "over a year's intensive study of modern India" ?

It is true that we have had a number of foreign authors in our midst during the last five years. India has never harboured so many American journalists as at present. But they are all accredited war correspondents come here on an essential war job. They took India in their stride, occasionally set down their impressions—flattering or otherwise—and went their way. What they were interested in was not India

but war, at the most, the part played by India in the war.

Even the authors, poets and journalists in India have been pre-occupied with the war all these years, though they are suffering from a terrible frustration. In our wounded national pride we sometimes shout "India has nothing to do with the war," but the war is very much with us. Pick up any Indian paper and you will find most of the space devoted to war news—more than the average British or American paper gives. Maybe just because we do not enjoy democracy and freedom, our devotion to the abstract ideal of liberty has become more belligerent than that of the Allied belligerents themselves !

And yet here was a famous English writer forgetting the total war in which the world was engaged and calmly settling down to study India : *Not* the Jap threat to India. *Not* the war effort of the Indian people. *Not* the exploits of the Indian soldiers. *Not* even the amenities for British troops. No, Sir ! Beverley Nichols was not in the least concerned with all this when he came to India in 1943. He had apparently nothing to do with the war itself. So with evident relish he occupied himself in the congenial task of studying Indian art, medicine, music, cinema, etc., etc. Don't rush to the analogy of Nero fiddling, for we are only at the end of Chapter One and Nichols was not merely an escapist.

## CHAPTER II

### AT THE VICEROY'S HOUSE

THE news that Beverley Nichols had braved the hardships of war-time travel and had arrived in India was rather intriguing. Some of us were his admirers and our curiosity was naturally aroused as to the background and purpose of his visit.

Had he come as a war correspondent, or on some official assignment ? If not, how could he escape the National Service Act and undertake a leisurely jaunt in the midst of a world conflagration ? Why should he have made the Viceroy's House in New Delhi of all places his first port of call ? If I remember aright, it was from there that we got the first intimation of his visit to India, as the Viceroy and even the provincial Governors still enjoy the royal privilege of issuing a daily Court Circular : *Mr. Beverley Nichols has arrived.*

Why should Nichols have come to India at all in 1943 ? For in that graceless year this country hardly provided good 'copy' except to a coroner. One could have understood his coming here in 1942 when the country was in a ferment and the calendar was moving inexorably towards August 9 and all that. But in 1943 Gandhi and his Congressmen were in jail and everything was all right with the British world in India.

On the eve of Nichols's visit India was dead



politically. While Lord Linlithgow took care of the body lying in cold storage, Leopold Amery occasionally mumbled funeral chants over it in his speeches in the Commons. In 1943 India enjoyed peace, perfect peace, the peace of the grave. Only jackals and vultures are attracted by such a *mise en scene*.

## II

In the Foreword to *Verdict On India* Nichols has made an attempt to answer the foregoing question and to clear his *bona fides*. "I came to India," he writes, "originally, as a correspondent of Allied Newspapers: a long and serious illness interrupted this connection; I stayed on as an independent observer; and when I felt that I had observed enough, I wrote this book." He was astonished that the Indian Press chose to regard him as "ambassador of Empire." He stresses the fact that his book is all his own work. "It is not British propaganda. It does not represent the official point of view: it is not sponsored by the India Office."

That may well be so, but it does not make the manner of his coming here the less intriguing. It is hard to visualize this elegant æsthete undertaking to conduct an autopsy of India for the fun of it. Incidentally one recalls that even Miss Katherine Mayo claimed to be only "an average American . . . a volunteer unsubsidised, uncommitted and unattached," when she came to make her sexo-sociological research in this country. Both of them

protested their status as independent observers too much. At least Miss Mayo could plead as an excuse her womanly curiosity and the globe-trotting bug which bites most Americans.

What bit Beverley Nichols ? What prompted the Allied Newspapers to send such a star reporter on such a barren assignment ? Not a ripple disturbed the stagnant political waters of India in 1943. What was Nichols expected to do then ? Watch the Himalayas at sunrise and the Taj Mahal by moonlight and cable a rhapsody about these stirring phenomena ? Give a whacking big pat on the backs of Linlithgow and Maxwell for teaching the Indians that the British really meant business ? Protest against the doughboys for cornering all the taxis and glad-eye girls in Calcutta and New Delhi ? Or just go into his usual ecstasies over the roses of India, which could smother Nichols by their very smell ? One would have indeed given much to listen to his panegyrics over Nishat, Shalimar and the other lovely gardens planted in Kashmir by the Moghul Emperors.

Unfortunately the very first garden that Nichols saw was not the living legacy of a Shah Jehan but the abortive handiwork of an Edwin Lutyens—"formal as a chess-board." It was still more unfortunate that his first introduction to India was made in the Viceroy's House in New Delhi. It was like putting the wrong end of a telescope to one's eyes. It would have been as appropriate for a student of contemporary Russia to stay with Czar Nicholas at the Kremlin, or of pre-

revolutionary France to be a guest of King Louis at the Versailles Palace. The two hapless monarchs could at least claim to be sons of the soil, rulers by divine right. The Viceroy is a foreigner, a bird of passage, mere agent of an alien power which rules India by right of conquest. He has two faces : the one of a demi-god, the other of a super-policeman. And it is the latter visage which is most familiar to Indians.

It is significant that Sir Stafford Cripps, when he came on his ill-fated mission to India in 1942, refused to stay at the Viceroy's House, and insisted on having his own independent establishment, though he was a member of the War Cabinet and a special emissary of His Majesty's Government. Cripps instinctively knew that the stilted surroundings of the Viceroy's House would serve as a bar sinister to the success of his mission. Though the mission failed anyway, it certainly got a most auspicious start, thanks to the shrewdness of Sir Stafford.

### III

Nichols rushed in where Cripps feared to tread and began his "intensive study of modern India" at the wrong end. Very much at the wrong end. He has always thrived in society drawing-rooms and perhaps it was thus natural for him to begin to 'do' India in the biggest drawing-room in India—what they call the Durbar Hall. He was so grateful for the royal hospitality and so much dazzled by the

Viceregal pomp and splendour that he straightway proceeded to justify it "as it accorded with India's history."

Now, in the first place, the present pomp and splendour of the Viceregal Court are but a cheap and shoddy imitation of the grandeur of the ancient Hindu Emperors or of the Great Moghuls. Even the ruins of the seven old Delhis are any day more imposing than the artificial and wholly un-Indian setting of New Delhi—the eighth Delhi founded by the British. The only tribute to the British Imperial capital came from the Frenchman M. Clemenceau. "What a magnificent ruin it would make!"—growled The Tiger when he visited New Delhi after the last war. At a time when even King George had cut his own expenses to the bone, it was ridiculous for his mere representative to affect a royal style!

Even though the Indian kings of yore were famed for the brilliant pageantry of their courts, they never lost personal touch with their subjects. The Haroun-al-Raschid tradition is ingrained in the oriental mind. From the Great Asoka, who lived like a Buddhist *Bhikku* (mendicant), to the Moghul Emperor Jehangir, who had installed a bell outside the ramparts of his palace so that the humblest of the humble could summon him personally, the Indian kings have been always accessible to their subjects. The British Viceroys on the other hand have been about as accessible to the average Indian as Mount Everest.

Apart from this, living in an unnatural, isolated

atmosphere has a warping effect on the mind of the Exalted One himself. Even the pomp-loving Lord Wellesley wrote nearly a century and a half ago : " In this magnificent solitude I stalk about like a Royal Tiger, without even a friendly jackal to soothe the severity of my thoughts." His successor, Lord Cornwallis, heartily hated the whole show : " Like it, Fleming ! "—he told a confidant, " Not at all ! Not at all ! I shall never be able to find my way about it without a guide, nor can I divest myself of the idea of being in a prison, for if I show my head outside a door, a fellow with a musket and fixed bayonet presents himself before me. I will not have this continued, I won't indeed, Fleming."

Another Viceroy, Lord Minto, has left an amusing impression of his first night in the Viceroy's House, which was then in Calcutta : " When I first went to bed, I was followed by fourteen persons in white muslin gowns into the dressing-room. One might have hoped that some of these were ladies ; but on finding that there were as many turbans and black beards as gowns, I was very desirous that these bearded housemaids should leave me . . . which, with some trouble and perseverance I accomplished, and in that one room I enjoy a degree of privacy, but far from perfect."<sup>1</sup>

## IV

It is of the least moment to us how many miles of red carpet are spread in the Viceroy's House, or how

<sup>1</sup> Dennis Kincaid : *British Social Life in India*, pp. 116-119.

many hundreds of liveried footmen wait upon Their Excellencies, or how many dozens of courses a Viceregal banquet consists of. But it is most revealing that the very first result of Nichols's "intensive study of modern India"—when Japan was knocking on the gates of India, when tens of thousands of people were rotting behind prison bars without trial, and when hundreds of thousands were dying like flies in Bengal—was a defence of the tawdry setting and empty pomp of the Viceroy's House.

To say the least, this was really a silly thing to do. As a trained reporter, if not as an impartial observer, he should have waited to see the ragged hamlet in which the Indian peasant lives before justifying the palatial setting from which the British Viceroy rules. The latter gets a salary higher than that of the President of the richest country in the world, its ratio to the average *per capita* income in this country working out at something like 6,000 : 1. Nor is it a valid argument that the Viceroy has to keep up all the antiquated trappings because he happens to be the "overlord of these glittering personages"—the Indian Princes. If but the whisper goes from New Delhi that the "overlord" is keen on Spartan simplicity, these satellites of the Raj will present themselves in sackcloth if not ashes at the next Viceregal levee.

Writing such an article at such a time was merely asking for trouble, and Nichols got it immediately its summary was cabled back to India. Indian journalists naturally criticised his views as undemocratic and

antediluvian, as they were perfectly entitled to do. So enchanted was Nichols, however, with the "good time" he had as the guest of the Viceroy—which really means of the Indian tax-payer with a daily income of 4*d.*—that he felt terribly upset by the comments. Then and there began his personal feud with the Indian press, which has spread like a rash on the pages of *Verdict on India*.

Nichols was obtuse enough not to understand that such reactions were only natural. He was piqued and riled and promptly made a terrific grievance out of them. "Almost from the day I set foot in India," he writes in the Foreword, "the national press chose to regard me, to my considerable astonishment, as ambassador of Empire, envoy incognito, armed with all manner of secret weapons of diplomacy and intrigue."

Perhaps the Olympian atmosphere in New Delhi affected his perspective. Listen to this extract from his diary: 'Cannot get used to bare feet of Viceregal servants, always afraid they will tread on drawing pins and create social crisis. . . . Who was the Maharajah who came to dinner tonight and were those real pearls? Something very touching about drinking the health of the King Emperor . . . It certainly sounds well . . . "The King Emperor," with the candlelight flashing on the glasses and bringing out the lovely silver tints in the tuberose.'<sup>1</sup>

When one reads such boudoir confessions, one understands why Beverley Nichols has often been

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 26.

mistaken for a woman. Among others, a reviewer of *Punch* who was noticing a book by Nichols believed that the author's name hid a woman's identity. He must have thought that only a female could write in such gushing style about, for example, pins, pearls and tuberoses. *What lovely roses, darling!* A cameraman in Hollywood, who was asked to take a test of Nichols, also expected to see Beverley in a skirt!

Such feminine fears about a 'social crisis' also make one sympathise with the feelings of the rather liverish English gentleman whom Cecil Roberts once saw picking up a magazine in an hotel—only to throw it away in disgust the very next moment with the agonized cry "My God—that fellow!" When out of natural curiosity Roberts picked up the magazine, (the story is told in *Half Way*) he was confronted on the cover with a full-length portrait of Beverley Nichols clad in a gorgeous dressing gown, looking as if he had just committed the unpardonable sin!

## V

There was thus every justification for Indians to be critical of Nichols's very first utterance. Even his fans realized that he had put his foot in it. The foot, incidentally, got infected and refused to be cured. It compelled him to sever his connection with the Allied Newspapers and disabled him for most of his stay in this country. Nichols could have more aptly called his book *Odyssey On An Infected Foot*, for though



he has tried his best to keep his foot out of its pages, the infection has remained. It is a case of psychosis.

Leaving aside this tragic development, Nichols's antecedents were not such as to carry any assurance regarding his activities in India. Brilliant and banal by turn, his voluminous writings have been variations on a single theme—the theme being Beverley Nichols. Lacking any ideological convictions, he has flitted from one cause to another like a gaudy butterfly. He has flirted with many a movement but is wedded to none. He could sell himself well, could Nichols, whether he wrote about the Lourdes miracles or the Russian purges, whether he espoused Dr. Buchman's Oxford Group or Mosley's British Union.

His initials may well have stood for Big Noise. He has been making considerable noise since he left his school—and has remained as shallow and superficial as he was then ! That is why after more than twenty years of successful authorship he has still to be recognised as a literary figure. One searches his name in vain in books dealing with modern English literature. He is not even counted among the leading British journalists. This is really a pity considering his undoubted talents. *Success made him a failure !*—may well serve as his literary epitaph.

Nichols has been various things at various times. Even his enemies cannot accuse him, nevertheless, of having indulged in any progressive views and radical pursuits, intellectual or political. He had no reputation to lose as a champion of the underdog, or as a fighter for democracy and freedom, or, much less, as a friend

of India when he came to this country. He wanted to write a book on India and he was shrewd enough to know what kind of book would bring him the loudest applause and the largest royalties. He knew his public in England and America. He knew what would serve the British Empire well : as we will see presently, the British Empire was the one cause which he considered worth fighting for.

## VI

The Daniel come to judgment was not new to such assignments. Years ago when he had just come down from Oxford, he had undertaken a similar task, the only difference being that in 1921 he was out to whitewash a ruler, while in 1943 he came to blackguard a people. On both the occasions the ruler was being threatened by the people with marching orders, though in the first case he did quit and in the second hasn't—yet !

All this did not make the slightest difference to the blithe spirit of Beverley Nichols. He came to India with the same zest and alacrity with which he had gone to Greece twenty-two years earlier. He hoped to make the same sensation with his dashing pen. But let us have it from the (Trojan) horse's own mouth. Open your Penguin edition of *Twenty-five* at page 100 and read :

“ And then one day, there came a letter which set my heart beating quickly . . . it was from my publishers, and it told me the following story :

“ A new revolution, it seemed, was on the point of breaking out in Greece. That unfortunate country was in the direst distress, being ruled by a monarch (the late King Constantine) who was not recognized by the Allies, who had already been exiled once, and who, unless drastic measures were taken, would be exiled again . . .

“ The only way in which Greece could be saved was by the recognition of King Constantine by the Allies (who regarded him) as an Arch-Traitor, a sort of miniature Kaiser, who by his treachery and his double-dealing has imperilled our cause throughout the whole of the Near East.

“ But that legend, it was now alleged, was false. It had been built up . . . on a fabric of complete falsehoods. The astounding nature of these falsehoods was contained in a collection of documents which was being carefully guarded. In those documents was material for a book which would cause a sensation throughout Europe.

“ Would I go to Athens and write that book ? I should be given immediate access to the documents, I should be under the special protection of the Greek Government, I should have, as a matter of course, the entrée to every circle of Greek Society . . . from the Court downwards. And all my expenses would be paid.

“ Would I go to Athens ? Would I go to heaven ? . . . What should I be but a political adventurer, delving into secrets of which, at the moment, I knew

nothing, in a distant and romantic capital which was alive with intrigue ?

“ Would I go to Athens ? Without a moment's delay I sat down and wrote a telegram, saying that if necessary I would start tomorrow.”

Unfortunately for Nichols, those kilted and smelly killjoys, the Greeks, kicked out the tyrant Tino before they had the benefit of reading his sensational *Verdict On Hellas*. It proved an abortive performance, though one hopes that all the expenses of the author were paid just the same—by the flourishing British publisher if not by the bankrupt Greek King.

Nichols's love of political adventure was to remain unfulfilled for more than a score of years until one fine morning in 1943 he received a similar letter from the Allied Newspapers asking him if he would go to New Delhi . . .

•

CHAPTER III

A SAFE BET WITH AMERY

WOULD Nichols go to New Delhi ? Would he go to heaven ?

New Delhi in 1943 was not a far cry from Athens in 1921, though everything was on a vastly magnified scale. A prolonged war. A people seething with discontent. A ruler being asked to quit. A collection of documents which was being carefully guarded in the archives of the Home Department of the Government of India. Material for a book which would cause sensation all over the world. Entree to every circle of Society from the Viceregal Court downwards. And, presumably, all expenses paid.

If the setting was similar, Nichols's role also was similar. True, he knew India even less than he did Greece. But then with a certain type of authors ignorance is an asset. It passes for independence and impartiality of outlook. So independent and impartial Nichols professes to have been that he would have us believe that he himself was slightly startled by the outcome of his study of India.

"It is inevitable," he tells us with a disarming naivete in his Foreword, "that most of them (Hindus) will hate it (*Verdict On India*) from the first sentence to the last. In some ways I hate it myself, if only because it is so totally different from the book I had wished to write. I came out to India with high hopes

and ideals ; I left . . . but you will see that for yourself."

We will, presently. But meanwhile one must note here the amazing fact that the man who suddenly decided in the midst of a world war, to devote more than a year "to trace the workings of the Indian mind"—whatever this may mean—had not till then taken the least interest in Indian affairs. He must have read Milton's lines about "Ormuz and Ind" and heard about the Pagoda tree which Clive and Hastings shook so vigorously and profitably. And occasionally in the daily press he must have come across references to "the brightest jewel in the British crown" and "the naked fakir." But otherwise the 400 million people of India did not obtrude upon his attention. One hardly finds any mention of India in the numerous books written by Nichols.

## II

But wait a minute. Was not India a part of the British Empire? Did it not really constitute *the* Empire of Britain? Did not Churchill, Nichols's own leader,<sup>1</sup> frequently harp on the theme that "the loss of India would mark and consummate the downfall of the British Empire," that two out of every ten Britishers depend for their very existence upon India? And did not the erstwhile pacifist, Nichols himself, suddenly discover in 1938 that, "there is one thing worth fighting for . . . and that is the

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 165.

British Empire . . . Even to a pacifist, the Empire is worth defending . . . It is worth defending not only for the benefits it bestows upon the inhabitants of this island, but upon the immense range of races that are united in its sway.”<sup>1</sup>

Now take a deep breath and read on : “ Give an Englishman a rifle and he will not run amok.” (Shades of Jallianwalla Bagh ! ) “ Give him a whip, and he will be loth to use it.” (Shades of the Civil Disobedience Movements ! ) “ Give him authority and he will make no unnecessary parade of it.” (Shades of the Defence of India Rules ! ).

Yes. You have guessed it right. The Bright Young Lad is coming to India. Read on :

“ The example of India is, surely, sufficient proof of this, if any were needed. The inhabitants of India number 352,837,778. The total English population is 293,950. Three hundred thousand to police, administer, supervise and control three hundred million ! To be precise one Englishman for a thousand Indians.” (This was in 1938. The ratio must be much more in Nichols’s favour now) “ It is an unanswerable retort to the trouble makers of the Left who talk about English oppression in India. If we needed a quarter of the spies, soldiers, and police to control the natives of India as the Kremlin needs to control its own Russian people, we should be obliged to keep a standing army of several millions.”<sup>2</sup>

There you have Beverley Nichols from A to Z.

<sup>1</sup> *News of England*, p. 307.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308.

All the five feet ten inches of him from his handsome head to his infected foot, which I hope has completely healed by now.

And there is also the little microbe of the *Verdict on India*, though it was to lie dormant in his system for another six long years.

It was a classic remark of Goering that when he heard the word 'culture' he felt like picking up his cutlass or maybe his revolver, though cutlass sounds better in the hands of this great Nazi scoundrel. Similarly when Nichols hears the word 'India,' he immediately thinks of the Englishmen needed to police, administer, supervise and control three hundred million people. Not to educate and uplift them, not to raise their standard of living, not to enable them to be a free and prosperous people, but to police, administer, supervise and *control* them !

This association of ideas will prove extremely valuable to a psychiatrist. India does not remind him of her ancient civilization, of her kings and conquerors, saints and philosophers, of her majestic mountains and mighty rivers, of Ajanta or Taj Mahal, of her grinding subjection and her gnawing hunger. The first idea evoked in his mind is of policing and controlling her people, as if they were a nation of criminals, and the country itself a vast concentration camp.

Nichols exults in the thought that Britain needs far less spies, soldiers and police to control the natives of India than the Kremlin needs to control



its own Russian people. An extremely revealing analogy indeed !

Barely one Englishman to a thousand Indians ! Why, even Himmler the Killer must have needed a far larger proportion of storm-troopers to police, administer, supervise and control Belsen and Buchenwald.

### III

Would Nichols go to India ? By Golly, he would. But, unlike in 1921, he could not have simply sat down when he got the letter from the Allied Newspapers and sent a telegram saying that, if necessary, he would start the next day. For in 1943 there was a war on and it was no longer possible for one to go to Paddington and buy a ticket for the Antipodes.

Patriotic Britons were being urged from a thousand hoardings not to journey to Brighton let alone think of a voyage to Bombay. Every square inch of transport whether by rail, sea or air, was precious and was reserved strictly for essential war services or supplies. One had to plan a tour months ahead, fill a number of forms and pull a number of wires. Many Indians have been stranded in Britain and more Britishers in India all these years simply because they could not secure a passage. One has to satisfy the authorities that his or her trip abroad is an essential part of the war effort, before the application can even be considered. Otherwise one has simply to cool one's heels.

According to a recent estimate about 5,000 British

men, women and children, retired officials and civilians and their families and children of school-going age, are impatiently waiting in India (June 1945) for shipping passages—which the greater number have little hope of securing within “a reasonable period”—to return to the United Kingdom. If such is the situation after the end of the war in Europe, one can easily realize how serious it must have been three years ago when Nichols was granted a two-way passage.

A prospective traveller to India had to satisfy not merely the war transport authorities about the essential nature of his visit, but had also to reassure the India Office about his antecedents unto the third generation. It would have been much easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for the visa of a pro-Congress Britisher to pass through the hands of Mr. Amery. One has to be in the good books—at any rate not on the black list—of the India Office before being allowed to set foot on the Indian soil or to stay there a minute longer than it takes to say sedition.

Even some left-wing members of Parliament were unceremoniously refused passage to India, while a few American missionaries in this country, who had made themselves troublesome to the Raj, were promptly bundled out. It is notorious that even such an eminently safe and sane person like Mr. Rajagopalachari, ex-Premier of Madras, who has kept scrupulously aloof from the *Quit India* movement and has even resigned his membership of the Congress,

could not secure a passage to England in spite of repeated requests.

Nichols had not to bother in the least about his passage to India. In fact he must have enjoyed No. A priority. Even though he had never met Mr. Amery—as he is at pains to tell us—he was a safe bet with him. With Amery and Brendan Bracken in Britain and Maxwell and Tottenham in India. They could allow him “a completely individual expression of a personal point of view” without any fear that he would set the Ganges on fire. Indeed, he was the biggest catch of the season from the official point of view even though his visit was sponsored by the Allied Newspapers—God bless them! Just imagine persons like William Gallachar or Jim Maxton, or Miss Ethel Mannin, or even like Commander Stephen King-Hall, or J. B. Priestley, or Michael Foot seeking passage to India in the year 1943. The very idea would make the *tonga* ponies in New Delhi laugh!

#### IV

Though *Verdict On India* has proved the most sensational book of its type since *Mother India*, it is not the first product of the intensive study of war-time India. Nichols was only the latest, even if the most notorious, of a long line of propagandists—I beg your pardon—of independent observers who have somehow been attracted by India in spite of the acute discomforts and hazards of war-time travel.

Let me name just a few.

(1) Mr. Peter Muir came to India a year earlier than Nichols and made an equally prolonged and intensive study of India along with his wife. Result : *This Is India*—guaranteed to be all his own work though evil-minded fellows say that it was revised, checked-up, rewritten and rehashed by the British Information Services in the United States. Thirty thousand copies of this book were purchased for free distribution in America.

(2) Another obliging American, Post Wheller, is the author of *India Against The Storm*—a title which explains itself. This, too, is his own work, though the British Information Services obligingly distributed it gratis in America. Incidentally Post Wheller is a cousin of Miss Mayo.

(3) Wing-Commander Grant-Ferris, M.P., made an extensive tour of India in 1943. A number of foolish Indians made a lot of Grant-Ferris. The gallant Wing-Commander was, however, modest enough to believe that his study of India was not sufficiently intensive to produce a book. So on his return, he gave *his* verdict on India in a single sentence : "Indians are not fit for self-government." Brevity may be the soul of wit, but it sometimes lets the cat out of the bag.

(4) Then there is the great British scientist, Dr. A. V. Hill, who came to India as an official adviser and after his return has constituted himself a non-official adviser of Indians on every conceivable subject—and also a zealous champion of British industry, providing the technical touch to lay pro-

paganda. Referring to the willingness of British industrialists to supply capital goods to India for her economic development, he coolly warned us the other day that "British industry is not going to do things for love only," and that they would help only on the basis of equal share in the control of the industry concerned. It is not so well known in this country that the distinguished professor is not merely the secretary of the Royal Society but was also a Conservative member of Parliament.

Perhaps one ought to exclude from this list a number of foreign missions which have toured this country under official auspices during the last few years as being on a high diplomatic level, but one may include in it the names of a few Indians, like the members of the Sarma Mission, who have been enabled to travel to Britain and America to speak on behalf of India. They represent the reverse flow of "independent observers." Though they were provided with talking points as well as tickets, they, too, will surely react as violently to the words "British Propaganda" as does Nichols. All of them were small fry, however, incapable of much mischief, and they have already been swallowed by the obscurity from which they were raised.

There is one Indian, nevertheless, who has earned too much notoriety to be ignored here. T. A. Raman—Thirulingam Ramanujam, to give him his full name—was a student-*cum*-journalist of sorts who found himself stranded in Britain when the war was declared. British propaganda scouts picked him up

and after the necessary priming dispatched him to America as "a staunch Indian nationalist journalist whose journalism is unimpeachable for its accuracy and fair-mindedness."

Later on he came to India allegedly on behalf of an American newspaper alliance (not the Allied Newspapers) and spent a number of months in travelling and making an intensive study of modern India *a la* Nichols. Though he contributed a few articles to the Anglo-Indian press, he did not apparently file a single message for his principals, which was not on account of an infected foot either.

On return to the States, Raman canned the fruits of his research in two volumes *What Does Gandhi Want?* and *A Report On India*. These books are not much in evidence in India but more than a hundred thousand copies were distributed free in America by the British Information Services, a few being air-mailed even to Chungking. The first book is a collection of garbled extracts from the *Harijan* and indulges in mud-slinging at Gandhi, to whom it is ironically dedicated. *A Report On India* was meant to educate the Americans on Indian affairs as the British Government would like them to be educated.

It is easy to find evidence of ghost-writing in Raman's books. In his Prologue to *What Does Gandhi Want* appear the following gems: Gandhi "must be won to *our* side." "Can *we* do business with Gandhi?" The *we* was, of course, His Master's Voice.

It is amazing to find that publishers with high reputation like the Oxford University Press should

have sponsored Raman's books. They boosted Raman as "a friend" of Gandhi, which is a palpable falsehood. Another book by him *India* was advertised as "an up-to-date and objective view of his country's history and political problems by a staunch Indian nationalist, *who is well known and respected by the British Administration.*" This was a masterpiece of the proverbial British understatement. As well-known and respected as was—may one add?—John Amery (the son of the late Secretary of State for India) by the Nazi administration?

When the mask of independence and nationalism was finally torn from Raman's face during a lecturing tour in the States, he was openly rewarded by being appointed as the head of the Indian Information Bureau in America.

## v

It is rather odd that British propaganda regarding India is directed mainly towards the United States. All the books mentioned above were intended solely for American consumption. *Verdict On India* must have, of course, proved a bestseller in America, while the *Reader's Digest* with its circulation running into millions published it in an abridged form. Incidentally, when the Indian Scientists Delegation, which was in the States then, sent a contradiction of a false statement in the book, the *Digest* refused to publish it, much as the London *Times* refused to publish a

rejoinder to *Mother India* signed by almost all the leading Indian residents in Britain then.

That reminds one that Katherine Mayo's highly salacious book has of late been in constant demand for free distribution in America by the British Information Services. An enterprising British publisher has recently (1945) brought out even an Indian edition of *Mother India*—the first Indian edition—19 years after its original publication! Somebody must have been jealous of the sales of Nichols's book to give a rejuvenation treatment to Miss Mayo. On re-reading it I found that the old girl can still give a few points to her British rival.

America is the main target for British Propaganda. It seems as if India's battle for freedom has to be fought neither in Britain nor in India but in the United States! Books and pamphlets, background material and guidance notes, topical contributions and spot news—all highly coloured, most of it anti-Congress and anti-Gandhi—is being liberally mailed from the British Embassy in Washington which has an Indian propaganda branch attached to it. Editors, columnists (led by the redoubtable Dorothy Thompson), novelists, dons and missionaries are being roped in in this anti-Indian racket and even the Royal Bank of Canada and the Federal Council of the Churches in America are reported to have taken a hand in it!

According to Mr. Chaman Lal, who made an extensive tour of America in 1944 and had thus an opportunity to study facts at first hand, the Govern-



ment of India spends about two and a half million rupees and the British Government about ten to twelve million dollars every year for anti-Indian propaganda in America. About 10,000 persons are engaged in this mission of advocating the cause of British Imperialism in America.

Mr. Chaman Lal's disclosures have been contradicted by the Government of India but the importance it attaches to propaganda in America is strikingly illustrated by the fact that two successive Principal Information Officers of the Government of India have been dispatched to America, while their I.C.S. boss, the Secretary of the Department of Information himself, has also made an extensive sojourn in the States. Above all there is the Agent-General of the Government of India permanently stationed in Washington to make contacts on the highest level.

In spite of all this high-pressure propaganda, the American people at large remain sympathetic to the cause of India, and highly critical of the British. They would listen rather to Mrs. Vijaya Laxmi Pandit than to Sir Ramaswamy Mudaliar or Sir Firoze Khan Noon, the (British nominated) Indian delegates to the San Francisco Conference. After all they themselves were a British Colony less than two centuries ago and the Boston Tea Party was held only to launch the *Quit America* movement.

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## CHAPTER IV

### THE SECRET OF A MISSION

THE reader of this book, particular if he happens to be an admirer of Beverley Nichols, is likely to stop here and lift his eyebrows in a question mark. "Why is the author inflicting upon us this recital of the British propaganda racket in America?"—he is likely to ask. "It may be as he says or it may not be. After all, there is a war on and propaganda is only the fourth arm of the modern war machine. Indeed, Dr. Goebbels has taught us that it should take precedence even of the army, navy, and air force, because it begins its insidious operation long before the other three. France remains the classic case of a great nation being struck down by propaganda even before the war began."

"It may be," the admirer of Nichols will remark in some exasperation, "that the British propaganda was directed more against Gandhi and his Congressmen than against the Nazis, Fascists and Japanese combined together. If it was so, they jolly well deserved it. Haven't these troublesome folk their own propagandists in the States and did not they make a regular scene at San Francisco running down the official delegates, holding their own highly publicised press conferences, and what not?"

"It may be all what Jog says, but what has that to do with Beverley Nichols? We expect the author

to give a relevant rejoinder to *Verdict On India*, not to go at a tangent and burrow into the drawers of the British Information Service in America. Why should the Yankee intrude into this private argument between a British author and the Indian people ? ”

A slightly exaggerated answer to this would be that the Yankee cannot be kept out of the argument because, like God Almighty, he is omnipresent and omnipotent, though not omniscient. One of the first appeals of Churchill after becoming Prime Minister was addressed to his half cousins across the Atlantic : “ Give us the tools and we will finish the job.” By the time the job was finished, however, there were three or four Doughboys for every single Tommy in Europe. It is the lavish supply of Lend-Lease material which has kept the wheels of war moving all these years.

For every prayer the Allied belligerents made to God in his heaven, there were two addressed to the State Department in Washington. Uncle Sam had become not merely the Quarter-master General but the great moral arbiter of the world. And, when all is said and done, he *is* rather a conscientious person. You cannot deny that. You cannot touch his pocket or draw upon his mighty war factories without at the same time appealing to his conscience and convincing him that your demands and your cause are just.

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## II

It so happened that in 1942 India was one of the only two bases from which the war against Japan could be waged. More. India was the only avenue through which China could be contacted. It thus became the meeting ground of China, Britain and America and commanded a high strategic importance. Military problems have a habit of overrunning the political field. So along with the American generals came President Roosevelt's Personal Representative, Mr. William Phillips, with the rank of a Minister. Along with guns and tanks and trucks came the United States Office of War Information. Even Uncle Sam felt it necessary to conduct his propaganda in India. The USOWI has beaten the Department of Information of the Government of India to a frazzle in the job of covering the war. And hot on the heels of the doughboys came the press-boys, accredited as war correspondents to the South-East Asia Command.

They were the real headaches of Amery and Linlithgow. The Government of India could suppress the Grady report and snub even Phillips himself by summarily turning down his request to see Gandhi in jail. But the press-boys were irrepressible. Instead of drinking the King-Emperor's health (discreetly coupled with that of the President) at the Viceroy's House, or attending musical soirees at the white palace of the Maharajah of X, or studying Ayurveda, or Indian art like the good Nichols, they insisted

upon probing into Indian politics, calling upon all sorts of seditious persons from Gandhi downwards, and generally criticising the typically wooden and unimaginative handling of the Indian problem. The New Delhi bureaucrats did what they could to guide and entertain and instruct the Yankees. They brought Sir Evelyn Wrench all the way from England to look after the American correspondents. And here I cannot do better than quote a contemporary record of Sir Evelyn Wrench's activities in New Delhi.

“ Sir Evelyn Wrench, salary Rs. 1,500 plus allowances, expert chaperon and conductor of human tours, multi-linguist, but without any knowledge of Indian languages, well-travelled but without any claim to any prolonged stay in America or India, foreign office baby with a ‘fast-unto-death’ look, accompanied by Lady Wrench, has been recently flown to India to conduct American journalists, officers and doughboys on tours of knowledge to understand India and her problems as the India Office would like them to understand. A report has it that both India Office and New Delhi have been feeling seriously perturbed at the outlook of some of the American correspondents about India, who have found it more difficult to adopt the point of view of the dry-boned British bureaucrat in India as against that of the Liberal Indian.

“ One of the systems of educating these correspondents hit on by Sir Evelyn Wrench has been to hold *Purdah* press conferences with agreeable pro-British Indians and to the complete or partial

exclusion of Indian pressmen. One day he took the Yanks to see round Mr. Veto, I mean the Hon'ble Dr. Ambedkar. He told them, 'Boys ! We will meet to-day the great leader of the Depressed Classes !' The 'Leader' was the word that went round. Unfortunately Dr. Ambedkar disappointed the correspondents because there was hardly anything 'depressed' about him. The correspondents, of course, asked several questions and drained out the truth from Dr. Ambedkar, but two questions were asked by Sir Evelyn Wrench which are typical of the function he has to perform and for which he is being paid Rs. 1,500 :—

*Sir Evelyn* : Could you tell us Dr. Ambedkar, as to who have been more helpful to the depressed classes ?

*Dr. Ambedkar* : Officials.

*Sir Evelyn* : Which class of officials ?

*Dr. Ambedkar* : The British officials (Hurrah ! A pension for Sir Evelyn Wrench)."<sup>1</sup>

### III

But the hard-boiled Yankees refused to play ball with Sir Evelyn Wrench. They insisted on seeing things for themselves and forming their independent judgments, which were none too complimentary to the British. Even when they were frankly baffled as by Gandhi's uncompromising adherence to non-violence, or sharply critical as of the Congress attitude, they remained distinctly sympathetic to the cause

<sup>1</sup> *The National Call*, New Delhi.

of Indian freedom. The pro-Indian—or anti-British if you prefer to call it that way,—propaganda was thus being conducted in America not so much by Indians as by American journalists like Louis Fischer, Edgar Snow, the Gunthers, and Clare Booth Luce, all of whom paid war-time visits to India.

Some sort of corrective was needed to this. Even the top-ranking British journalists had little chance of being read in America, while official propaganda lacked the intimate touch, though it was reaping a rich harvest in America and had rallied most of the American press against Gandhi and the Congress. It is easy to represent a person who is not with you as being against you. But this was not enough. It was necessary to pin down Gandhi and the Congress as dyed-in-the-wool Fascists, Fifth-Columnists, and Pro-Japs, and as a menace to the Allied cause.

It was vitally important to convince the Americans that the British handling of the Indian problem was not merely *bona fide*, but as much in the interest of America itself as of Britain. Britain could not quit India in the midst of a world war simply in order to allow the Japs to walk in and imperil the lives of thousands of American boys who were in the China-Burma-India theatre. Big Berthas like Dorothy Thompson and pea-shooters like T. A. Raman were good in their own way but somebody more subtle and original was needed to write what the editors call a human interest story and wean the American friends from their misplaced sympathy for the Hindus.

Beverley Nichols was the answer to the British

propaganda bureau's prayer. His visit to India in 1943 may have been undertaken at the invitation of the Allied Newspapers, but what a lucky coincidence that he should have come to India just when he was wanted most, that an accident should have prolonged his stay and enabled him to make an intensive study of this country, and that he should have written just the type of book that was hoped for !

Indeed by some telepathic process he seems to have anticipated to a nicety the requirements of the British Information Services in London, Washington and New Delhi, as the following extract will show. No ! It is not taken from the *Verdict On India* but from an article contributed by him to the *Sunday Chronicle*, London, on the eve of his departure for India. Read it carefully. It is a sort of missing link between the ape and the man, between Propaganda and Verdict.

“ I am on my way to India. I am going because I believe that what is known as the Indian problem is urgent and delicate ; that it has worldwide ramifications ; and that its importance will increase as months go by ; and . . . to speak frankly . . . because neither you, nor I, nor our American friends, are sufficiently well-informed about the subject. It is vitally important that we should know the facts. I want to discover at least some of them.”

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## IV

So you know now why Nichols came to India, and what the real inspiration behind the *Verdict On India* was. You will search the pages of that book in vain for any mention of the real motives that brought him all the way here. Not merely that, but Nichols has drawn a number of red herrings across his own trail to India in order to mislead his readers. It would have been a million times more straightforward and honest if he had merely printed the *Sunday Chronicle* article as an introduction to his book instead of protesting his independence and impartiality and outraged innocence in the Foreword, which is really an afterthought. But then it would have given the whole show away. Nichols would have passed the verdict upon himself: *Propagandist*!

*Verdict On India* is becoming as exciting as a detective story now. How methodically Father Brown would have unravelled it? How Sherlock Holmes would have chuckled over it in his dingy rooms in Baker Street: "Simple, my dear Watson! In the first place Nichols went to India because he believed (1) that the Indian problem was urgent and delicate, (2) that it had world-wide ramifications, (3) that its importance would increase as months go by, (4) that neither he himself nor his English readers, nor *our American friends* were sufficiently well-informed about it, (5) that it was vitally important that all of them should know the facts, and, finally, because (6) he wanted to discover at least some of those facts.

Hold fast to this data, Watson, and check the results carefully. A reader of *Verdict On India* goes away with the impression (1) that the Indian problem is as urgent as the Pyramids and as delicate as a bulldozer, (2) that its ramifications and importance are exaggerated out of all proportion by the crafty and unscrupulous Congress propagandists in order to frighten poor little Mr. and Mrs. Smith out of India, (4) that a vitally important part of Nichols's mission to India was to inform and enlighten, ahem, *our American friends*.

"Finally, my dear Watson, Nichols discovered so many facts about India (Area 1,623,015 square miles. Population 400 million. Civilization 5,000 years old) during his stay, for a large part of which he was hospitalized, as our American friends say, owing to an infected foot, that he felt entitled to pass his verdict upon the country straightway.

"But the real joke, my dear Watson, is that though Nichols spent over a year in India, he has yet to meet an Indian, as you will note in his very first chapter. He met Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs and Christians and Parsis but no Indian. He met Bengalis and Pathans and Madrasis, coolies and capitalists and criminals, gaol-birds and singing-girls, the untouchables and the pucca British Sahibs and the Anglo-Indians. But no, Sir, Nichols never found an Indian!

"This helps a lot to solve 'what is known as the Indian problem.' Why, if there is no Indian, there can be no Indian problem either! Simple, my dear Watson!"

## V

Actually we need no Sherlock Holmes to unravel the Nichols mission in India. But again I see the eyebrows of Nichols' admirers going up. "*Mission!* Why do you fasten such words upon Nichols, when he has himself made it clear that his book is a completely individual expression of a personal point of view? You shouldn't impute either motives or missions." To this I may reply that even when the commission of the Allied Newspapers came to an end owing to his infected foot, the motives and mission to which he gave expression in his *Sunday Chronicle* article remained with him.

Indeed he could pursue them with more freedom and zest, without either a censor or an editor cramping his style. A mission may be self-imposed, even if one is commissioned to do a job. My publishers may have suggested me to write this book, but I have my own mission to discharge—to show up the propagandist character of *Verdict On India*, to show up Nichols himself. I think that it is vitally important that the Indians and the British, and, above all, our American friends, should get the lowdown on Beverley Nichols—the man as well as his mission!

The reader has already seen that the man was not new to such missions. In fact he has thrived upon them. Apart from his abortive venture in Greece, he paid his first visit to the United States as the Secretary to the British Universities Mission in the first world war. "British Universities Mission" sounds properly

academic and absolutely above-board, but Nichols himself has recorded in his *Twenty-five* the fact that its tour "was largely for propaganda purposes."<sup>1</sup>

With the wisdom of forty-five summers, Nichols has taken scrupulous care not to refer to any mission in *Verdict On India*. But if in 1918 British propaganda could masquerade in America in the gown and mortar-board of Oxford and Cambridge dons, it could as well limp its way in India in 1943 on the infected foot of a third-rate novelist and sound as the independent verdict of a self-styled judge.

Beverley Nichols should be thankful in a way to his infected foot as it enabled him to stay in India long enough to finish his intensive study and also to live down his mission. Even the readers of *Sunday Chronicle* must have forgotten what originally prompted their favourite columnist to go to India, and must have consequently accepted the *Verdict On India* on the face-value of its Foreword. When one is on an urgent and delicate mission, one does not shout the news from the house-tops, least of all from the Viceregal House-top where one may be staying.

Unfortunately for Nichols, his mission in India was broadcast simultaneously with the news of his arrival in New Delhi. And, believe it or not, the gaff was blown by the Principal Information Officer of the Government of India himself, who released cyclostyled copies of the aforementioned *Sunday Chronicle* article to the Indian press with the bold and damning heading:

BEVERLEY NICHOLS' MISSION IN INDIA !

<sup>1</sup> Penguin edition, p. 11.

## CHAPTER V

### ON G'S, A'S—AND THE BIG G

THERE are four elemental G's which are said to be the secret of authors of bestsellers in the West—Girls, Gardens, Golf and God.

There was another G—the poor dear Germans—which came as a close fifth for popular British writers before Adolf Hitler bared his fangs and bit Neville Chamberlain squarely in the calf at Munich. I do not know whether Nichols writes on golf but all the other G's serve as unfailing grist to his literary mill. In fact there is only one other writer who made God so popular in Britain—Dr. C. E. M. Joad, but then it may be because (as the joke goes) Joad began by denying God and ended by pronouncing him with a long “o” and a soft ‘g’!

In India the name of God is legion, the gardens are few and far between, the girls are dusky and shy, golf is almost unknown and the Germans are regarded as the natural enemy of the British! Nichols had to bid a temporary good-bye to his favourite G's and find some other set to enliven the readers and put his Verdict across. Why not begin with the very first letter of the alphabet? Let us see: Actors. Actresses. A.D.C.'s. Ajanta. Ambedkar. Anglo-Indians. Architecture. Art. Ayurveda.

Which makes it as excellent a list as any. And Nichols has certainly shown amazing versatility by

exploiting his A's with as much success as he was wont to do his G's.

## II

If one were a seasoned literary craftsman like Nichols, how would one present one's mission to the world? The obvious answer is: By making it look least like a mission. By stoutly denying—with the appropriate air of outraged innocence—all allegations that one is a propagandist. And, if possible, by making one's book a work of art.

There are propagandists galore engaged by the various Ministries of Information who write by the column, talk by the quarter-hour, and walk as if they bear the whole burden of the war on their Herculean shoulders. They are straightforward, transparent, and usually futile. Then there are others whose asides and insinuations act like a hypodermic syringe, whose dropped hints set in motion a long train of thoughts and fears. Apart from this, there is the type which believes that truth is the best propagandist. It is represented by Mahatma Gandhi and the B.B.C. ! Like adversity, truth seems to make strange bed-fellows.

Nichols must have spent many an anxious hour on his hospital cot in deciding how he would present his facts to his readers in Britain and, yes, to his American friends. For, of course, he was busy collecting suitable facts even when his foot was poisoned and his mind clouded by pain and uncertainty about

the future of his foot as well as his mission ! “ People were dropping in to see me. Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, but now I look back on it, never an Indian.”<sup>1</sup>

*Never an Indian !* Ah ! That’s a nice if negative lead to the Indian story. In the language of the turf it sets the pace for the race, and it promises to be a most thrilling race indeed. Then one would bring out one’s facts one by one as also the artful A’s, which are to do duty for the elemental G’s and parade them in the paddock—to stick to the racing parlance.

But why be content merely with discovering facts ? Scores of histories and encyclopædias are chockfull of all sorts of facts about India. Besides, the British Information Services had already published in America a pamphlet *Fifty Facts About India*. It is not facts themselves which matter so much as the use one makes of them. So instead of merely tabulating them, why not offer them with a tag attached—with a ready-made verdict ?

The average reader of bestsellers doesn’t want to be vexed with facts and figures and statistics and high-sounding authorities. He is too busy to analyse and evaluate complex data even if he has the brains to understand them. Even while reading a detective story, he has no patience to unravel the clues one by one or to wade through long-winded descriptions. He usually skips the pages and cheats the author by a sneak preview of the last page. He is curious only to know who got the gallows and who the girl. He is

<sup>1</sup>*Verdict On India*, p. 58.

concerned more with the end rather than the development of a story, with the author's final verdict upon his characters rather than with the evidence on which it is based.

### III

So *Verdict On India* is not such a pointless or pretentious title as many critics have sought to make it. It is in fact clever as Nichols could make it. It hits the bulls' eye. The Verdict will stick to India even when the facts are forgotten or altogether disproved.

It is true that verdict on music and medicine and cinema, on ships and shoes and sealing-wax, sounds too much like *Don Quixote*. It would not do for a British author to go all the way to India in the fourth year of the war and tilt his literary lance at a hundred windmills, which have been creaking their way for thousands of years. Cervantes has killed that pleasant avocation for all time.

But then *Verdict On India* is as much a work of art as *Don Quixote* was. The object of Cervantes was to laugh down the romances of the chivalrous (and goofy) Knights-errant of medieval Europe. The mission of Nichols was to study modern India, to trace and damn "the workings of the Indian mind not only in politics but—*inter alia*—in art, in literature, in music, in medicine, in journalism, in the cinema, and, of course, in religion." This is quite a



mouthful but, more briefly, it can also be spelled as p-r-o-p-a-g-a-n-d-a !

Nichols has thus astutely disposed of the windmills though, unfortunately, he had no Sancho Panza to keep him company in his journeys "of many thousands of miles, on foot, by car, by bullock-cart, by aeroplane and occasionally on a stretcher." Here's the artistic touch. Does not your heart go out immediately in sympathy to poor darling Beverley lying helpless like a new-born babe on a stretcher ? By what overwhelming love for India and Indians must Nichols have been actuated to undergo all these hardships !

He is a poor playwright or propagandist who brings either his hero or his villain on the stage in Act one, scene one. First, you have to create the atmosphere, build up the background, win the sympathy of the audience, weave your plot around secondary characters and subsidiary incidents. This is where the A's were so useful to Nichols, like the old G's.

The A.D.C.'s and Actresses, Art and Ayurveda all help to establish his status as an independent observer, having nothing to do with politics, and less with propaganda. He is an æsthete at large shocked by the Philistinism and the vulgarity and the obsession of Ajanta wherever he went in India. His sensitive mind is searching in vain for some sign of light and life and beauty and truth amidst the anæmic imitations of Ajanta, the architectural monstrosities of Bombay and the hideous crowd of deities in the temples . . .

## IV

Actually, all the while, the hand of Nichols was itching to bring a G on the stage—the big G—Gandhi—the biggest thing in India, according to Lord Linlithgow.<sup>1</sup> He had really come to India in search of Gandhi and his Congressmen. They were the big game which this gallant literary *Shikari* had come to hunt in the tropical jungles of India.

It was they and not the medicine men and cinema stars who had made the Indian problem so “urgent and delicate.” It was they and not the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon who had provoked world-wide repercussions by their open rebellion against the British raj. It was they and not the artists and agriculturists who were increasing the importance of the Indian issue every passing month.

It was Gandhi and his Congressmen and not all the other eyewash and boloney to which Nichols has treated his readers which actuated the Allied Newspapers to send him to India in the year 1943.

It was in order to add Nichols's quota to the anti-Gandhi and anti-Congress propaganda, which was flooding the world then, and not to enable him to attend a musical soiree at the ‘great white palace of the Maharajah of X’ and to pry into the marital ambitions of Anglo-Indian girls that the British Government gave him a high priority passage to India.

It was the *Quit India* movement which brought

<sup>1</sup> Louis Fischer : *A Week With Gandhi* (Author's Note).

Nichols all the way here to do his bit for the Empire, though Gandhi and other Congress leaders were 'kept out of harm's way' (as Churchill put it) long before he set foot on Indian soil. By the end of 1942, 60,229 persons were arrested, 18,000 were detained without trial; 940 were killed and another 1,630 injured by military or police firing. Shooting a lion in a cage is neither bravery nor sport but it is propaganda all right. There is no scope for chivalry in this kind of thing, nor had Nichols much of that virtue to spare.

After all, locking up Gandhi was the least part of the job. Indeed a person like him becomes more troublesome in prison than he was when free. He remains "a dangerous and uncomfortable enemy, because his body, which you can always conquer, gives you so little purchase over his soul." It was necessary to convince the world that Gandhi was a cad, a traitor and a Japanese agent and that he was an enemy of the British, and *our American friends*, and even of large sections of the Indian people themselves! It was necessary to convince the world that men like Patel and Nehru were dyed-in-the-wool Fascists, foes of freedom and democracy.

It was necessary to convince the world that it was only the British love of fair-play and justice which compelled the Government merely to lock up the thousands of Congress saboteurs and Fifth Columnists instead of shooting them out of hand as any other country at war would have done,<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 155.

as they damn well deserved to be shot. Think of what Hitler would have done to them, what Mussolini would have done to them, what Tojo would have done to them ! But *we* happen to be British . . .

This is the hymn of hate which forms the central theme of *Verdict On India*. True, I have stripped it of the frills and furbelows and frivolities with which its author has draped it. I have presented it in its naked hideousness which may make the Christian Nichols shudder. It does sound slightly hysterical. But then hymns of hate are better shrieked in a hysterical tone than chanted to the tune of *Onward Christian Soldiers!* or *Cuddle Up A Little Closer!*

## v

Once on the Gadarene slope of propaganda, Nichols had to justify himself and his mission by hook or crook. What he could not discover he had to invent. What he could not see with his own eyes—and during the whole of his stay in India, Gandhi and thousands of Congressmen were behind prison bars—he had to take for granted from Government officials and the enemies of the Congress. What he could not read in the lines, he had to imagine as being written between the lines in some sort of secret, seditious ink. Nichols forgot that it is dastardly to hit a man when he is down, to heap abuses and accusations on his head when he cannot refute the charges. However, he remembered those so-called British virtues all right when writing about Oswald Mosley, the Fascist

leader, three years earlier. Listen to what he wrote about Mosley, who was interned under Regulation B : " If he is a traitor the prison is certainly the right place for him—though it seems a pity, in this war for ' democracy ' that he was swept into gaol without trial . . . I hold no brief for Mosley. But the fact that you hold no brief for a man does not mean that you approve of the scales of justice being weighted against him."<sup>1</sup>

What was sauce for the white-skinned, black-shirted Fascist British goose was not sauce for the dark-skinned, white-clad, Pacifist Indian gander. For Mosley, Nichols had sympathy in his imprisonment without trial, but for Gandhi he had only a tar-brush though he was locked up in a similar manner. He forgot the elementary canons of fair-play and justice no sooner he arrived in India. But then he was acting on his brief, justifying his mission to India and, also justifying Aldous Huxley's caustic comments upon the Englishmen in India.

" The ethical standards of Englishmen undergo a profound change as they pass from the essentially peaceful atmosphere of their own country into that of their conquered and militarily occupied Indian empire," writes Huxley. " Things which would be absolutely unthinkable at home are not only thinkable, but do-able in India. The Amritsar massacre, for instance. The battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton and it was on these and a score

<sup>1</sup> *Men Do Not Weep*, pp. 20-22.

or two of other school playgrounds that the Indian Empire was conquered and held down.”<sup>1</sup>

Naturally Nichols will deny hotly that he was a partisan or that *Verdict On India* was written only to show up Gandhi and the Congress as Fascists. “Why, if that was my only objective, I could have as well written the book in London,” he is likely to retort, “instead of going all the way to India and travelling thousands of miles on the hot and dusty plains of Hindusthan.” You have said it, brother! If *Verdict* had been written without the atmospheric background and in an impersonal and objective manner, it would not have been worth a tinker’s damn.

Propaganda, to be effective, should have the intimate touch, the verisimilitude and the warmth of the first person singular. Nichols had to come here as a distinguished and independent British author and study the Indian scene at first hand before being accepted as an authority. Thus alone would people at home and *our American friends* swallow his dope as authentic and disinterested. Nichols may have somewhat overdone it by taking on the role of a Daniel but how cleverly has he done it all the same!

*Verdict On India*—not, mind you, on Gandhi and Jinnah, or Congress and the Muslim League though it is only upon these two leaders and the organizations they represent that Nichols has passed any clearcut judgment. Even that *Verdict*—the verdict he had really come here to pronounce—is, however, hidden

<sup>1</sup> Aldous Huxley : *Ends and Means*, p. 18.

in a gigantic smoke-screen raised by Nichols to impress his readers and mislead his critics.

Out of the 256 pages of his book, almost 200 are devoted to the tittle-tattle on the A's which, though subsidiary and unimportant, helps to build up the background, establish the author's impress upon the reader's mind. It is not until you have waded through 156 pages that you come to the Big G—Gandhi. Let us see what Nichols has to say about him.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE HINDU HEILS BACK

THE pith and marrow of *Verdict On India* lies in the chapter "Heil Hindu." The "Hindu" stands for Gandhi and Congressmen, and the "Heil" is intended artfully to draw out the alleged resemblances between them and Hitler and his Nazis.

An excellent heading indeed and it highlights Nichols's mission in India as nothing else would have done. Even while the author was touring in this country and making his intensive study of modern India, I had frequently heard the report that "Heil Hindu" would be the title of his projected book. Nichols seems to have subsequently changed his mind for the simple reason that it would have been too loud and too blatant and would have, in fact, given the whole show away.

Naming a book is more ticklish a problem than naming a baby. You can christen a child as Patrick Shankar Mohamad and yet call him what you will. You can even change the name subsequently by a legal deed, but "Heil Hindu" remains "Heil Hindu" and affects one's credentials if not royalties for all time. *Verdict On India* sounds more impartial and authoritative and one is, of course, clever enough to present the star turn only in the third act after the minor sleight-of-hand and mumbo-jumbo tricks.



## II

Almost the first thing that Nichols discovered about Gandhi was that Gandhi was not India ! Now this negative discovery strikes the reader like an anti-climax, as if Columbus were to declare after landing on the New World that it was not India ! Unfortunately the great Genoese navigator believed to the day of his death that he did sail round the world to India, while the little British propagandist persists to the end of his book in denying that Gandhi is India ! " It is blatantly untrue," he shrieks.

The vehemence with which Nichols sets about disproving this popular remark—which like all such remarks is not to be taken literally—is really amusing. " Gandhi is violently repudiated by the overwhelming majority of 100 million Muslims, who regard him, quite rightly, as their most dangerous enemy. Gandhi is no more India to them than Laval is France to the Free French."

This sweeping generalization and the odious simile form a good sample of the Verdict. Apart from the fact that they will shame every responsible Muslim, it would be worth our while to inquire how this " Hindu Laval " has appeared to a few great men of the world.

Let us begin with the great Russian Leo Tolstoy, if only because his tribute was the earliest, paid at a time when Gandhi had just begun his experiments in Satyagraha in South Africa and was an unknown figure even in India. In his letter to Gandhi dated

September 7, 1910 Tolstoy observed prophetically :  
“Your activity in the Transvaal . . . is the most essential work, the most important of all the work now being done in the world, wherein not only the nations of the Christian, but of all the world will unavoidably take part.”<sup>1</sup>

The great Frenchman Romain Rolland has devoted a whole book (*Mahatma Gandhi*) to a penetrating study of his life and philosophy, from which the following quotation is taken at random :

“Gandhi has only conjured up gigantic shades of the past which had been lying prostrate in a moral lethargy. At the sound of his voice they have arisen, for they recognize themselves in him. He represents more than a message ; he is himself a great example. He has incarnated in himself the best souls of his land.”

Then there is the German (hounded out from his motherland by the Nazis) Albert Einstein, the greatest living mathematician, who remarked reverently “Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”<sup>2</sup>

We will *not* quote the American Pearl Buck, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature, because Nichols has dismissed her as “bucolic” owing to her courageous championship of India. So bucolic and *verboden* let her remain ! But another American, John Gunther, will, one hopes, pass muster if only

<sup>1</sup> *Gandhiji*, Karnatak Press, Bombay, p. 304.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. xi.

because he has personally sized up most of the captains and kings, dictators and would-be dictators of modern times. "Gandhi is adored as well as worshipped. His photograph is enshrined in a million cottages . . . Peasants may come twenty miles simply to see his train pass, even if it does not stop and he is not visible . . . All over India I noticed how the faces of people lit up when his name was mentioned."<sup>1</sup>

"You have quoted a Russian, a Frenchman, a German and an American—but is there no Englishman who thinks well of Gandhi? Why don't you quote him?"—the reader is likely to ask with some surprise. Because, the answer is, Nichols believes that the simple-minded Britishers are seduced by the unscrupulous Congress propagandists into believing that Gandhi is India. In fact it is to make them wise on this point that *Verdict On India* was written. So let me not spoil my case by quoting Harold Laski or H. G. Wells or Bernard Shaw.

### III

But wait a minute. I recall at least one English author who is not likely to have been perverted even by "Congress publicity mongers sunk so low in perfidy and misrepresentation,"<sup>2</sup> whom one can quote without turning the stomach of Nichols. And that author is—believe it or not!—Beverley Nichols himself! Let us see what Nichols thought of Gandhi

<sup>1</sup> *Inside Asia*, p. 384.

<sup>2</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 232.

before he sunk himself so low in perfidy and misrepresentation in the *Verdict On India*. Now this is not merely a return bouquet to Nichols: these charges will be pressed home presently with chapter, verse and a sledge-hammer. Meanwhile let us quote from *Cry Havoc* by Beverley Nichols (Jonathan Cape), p. 231. The author is criticising a certain school-book of history as leaving out all the modern historic personages:

“Let us ask ourselves the question ‘Who are the men in the history of the British Empire, who will be reckoned to have played a decisive part in these whirling years?’

“Well, obviously, one of the most important men in the recent history of the British Empire is Gandhi. We look him up in the index. Odd! He is not mentioned! In the G’s, where he should be, there is quite a lot about the Gesiths . . . There is also a lot about the author of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. But there is nothing about the man who, according to our elders and betters in the press, may yet be the author of the Decline and Fall of another Empire.”

Obviously, it would not do to refresh one’s memory with such a passage when one comes to India to do one’s little bit to stave off that threatened fall at the hands of Gandhi.

But this is not all. There is something more significant still. Here is another extract from a more famous book by Nichols—*The Fool Hath Said*. Open it at page 80. The author is discussing the mysterious

phenomenon of Christ's resurrection and he refutes the suggestion that His body might have been stolen by the following striking illustration :

" The same answer may be given to those who tell us that the Roman government had stolen the (Christ's) body . . . To show how ridiculous this theory is, let us consider a very simple parallel. Supposing that a particularly troublesome sect of Indians elevated Mr. Gandhi, during his lifetime, to the position of a god, and prophesied that he would die in prison and that his body would then ascend to heaven. Supposing that Mr. Gandhi did die in prison. Is it even vaguely likely that the British government would steal the body of Mr. Gandhi and conceal it, knowing that by doing so they were deliberately inflaming the faith of the fanatics who believed the body to have ascended ? "

Mark the association of ideas :

Christ—Roman Empire.

Gandhi—British Empire.

And yet the man who in 1933 was counted by Nichols himself as one of the most important men in the history of the British Empire and as one who " may be the author of its decline and fall," shrunk to the proportions of a slimy Laval immediately after he did envisage the fall of that Empire. He seemed to propagandist Nichols " a typical Hindu politician, of quite inordinate vanity, narrow, ignorant, and supremely intolerant " <sup>1</sup>—just because he had the supreme effrontery to ask the British to quit India.

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 158.

The man whose memory was spontaneously evoked by Nichols while discussing Christ's Resurrection in 1935 appeared to him to have obvious and "legion" resemblances with Hitler, the Anti-Christ, in 1944, just because in the intervening years he had made a world-shaking bid to resurrect his nation from slavery.

## IV

"Heil Hindu," as I said, is an excellent heading. But come to think of it, "Heil Hitler" would have been still better. For as the orthodox Hindus invoke Ganesh the elephant-god whenever they start a new undertaking, so Nichols seems to have invoked Adolf Hitler before pronouncing his verdict on Gandhi. He had to if only to stress the similarities between the Nazi Fuehrer and the Hindu Mahatma.

I have always held the view, that the master propagandist in Nazi Germany was not the club-footed Dr. Josef Goebbels but the glib-tongued Adolf Hitler himself. The latter's was the inspiration, even though the actual handling of the publicity of the Third Reich was left to men like Goebbels and Bormann. *Mein Kampf* serves as the bible of all propagandists and Nichols seems to have profited a good deal by its intensive study.

"In the big lie," wrote Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, "there is always a certain force of credibility because the broad masses of a nation . . . more readily fall victims to the big lie than the small lie, since they themselves often tell small lies in little

matters but would be ashamed to resort to large-scale falsehood. It would never come into their heads to fabricate colossal untruths, and they would not believe that others could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously."

Now, what would be the most colossal untruth, absolutely the cat's pyjamas of a falsehood regarding Gandhi? Interested persons have been fabricating all sorts of lies about Gandhi since long before he became a Mahatma. That he is a dictator is an old story, its new version being that he is a Fascist Dictator.

That he is an enemy of the Muslims and a foe of the Harijans has also become a stale, well-thumbed accusation. When the revered Kasturba (Mrs. Gandhi) was alive, it was often whispered that he was a tyrant of a husband to her. A bright British journalist even invented the story of her footing all the way from Victoria Terminus Station to Birla House, Bombay, with a bed-roll on her head, while the Hindu husband travelled thither in a luxurious limousine provided by his millionaire friend. The legend that Gandhi being a Banya is fond of money and the patron saint of all the capitalist geese who lay golden eggs at his feet is the stock-in-trade of all fiery radicals in this country. And when people want to create a real scandal about the Mahatma, they slyly hint that the Sevagram saint is really an epicure and rather fond of female company like the late President Wilson !

All this gossip in the Indian bazaar or the British press has passed over Gandhi's wizened head like

water over a duck's back ! No ! Such petty details wouldn't serve the purpose of an author like Nichols who had come all the way from Britain to make an intensive study of modern India. There must be something original, sure-fire, which would cut the very ground from the clay feet of the Hindu Colossus, something worthy of the reputation and genius of Nichols, something which would guarantee the success of his mission. Something . . .

*Eureka ! Eureka !!* Here is the discovery which would shake humanity like an earthquake, a discovery which had to wait till Isabella of Spain sent Christopher Columbus . . . sorry, till the Allied Newspapers sent Beverley Nichols to India in the year 1943.

What are the most treasured tenets of Gandhi's philosophy, the bed-rock on which his very life is founded ? Neither Swarajya nor freedom. Not Hindu-Muslim unity nor uplift of untouchables. Not Khaddar nor the cow. Not any of the numerous items of the constructive programme which he has been urging his followers to put into action all these years. They are the work-a-day details which inform but do not inspire his life. The twin principles which have sustained his frail frame all through 75 years are Truth and Non-Violence.

" I have no god to serve but Truth."<sup>1</sup>

"Non-Violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1&2</sup> Prabhu<sup>1</sup> and Rao : *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, pp. 23 and 24.



"If you take Truth and Non-Violence away from me, you take away everything,"—Gandhi has said this again and again. What is more, people—even his worst enemies—have taken this for granted. Whatever sins of omission and commission they accuse him of, they do not impugn his Truth and Non-Violence !

So let us lay the axe to the very root of his being. Let us pronounce the verdict that Gandhi is a liar and that his non-violence is "a violent humbug," "bogus from first to last."<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \*

*Macbeth* : I have done the deed—Didst thou not hear a noise ?

*Lady Macbeth* : I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry. Did not you speak ?

*Macbeth* : When ?

*Lady Macbeth* : Now.

*Macbeth* : As I descended ?

*Lady Macbeth* : Ay.

\* \* \* \*

Verdict has been passed on the Indian edition of *Aristides the Just*. The reputation of the Hindu George Washington has been pole-axed. The good deed is done. The die is cast.

The world, however, has an inconvenient habit of asking for evidence to justify a judgment. There will be a few doubting Thomases even in Britain, not to talk of America and India who will bluntly refuse to take Daniel Beverley Nichols at his word. They will call for proof. They must be silenced.

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 173.

But here one meets with an initial difficulty. In India the police can always put up at least a few witnesses for the prosecution. But even his worst enemies do not question Gandhi's personal honesty—drat them! Writes Nichols ruefully: "It is the almost invariable custom of writers who criticize Gandhi to soften their remarks with all manner of qualifications; they say 'we think his policy would not work—but of course we realize that this is because he is a saint'; or they say 'we differ from his reading of the facts—but we do not for a moment question his high regard for Truth' . . . I do not choose to follow this example."<sup>1</sup>

The Athenian who cast his vote against Aristides simply because he was tired of hearing him being called 'The Just' must have thought on similar lines, though, in fairness to him, it must be added that he had no propaganda axe to grind for the British Empire.

The chief witness whom Nichols has produced to belie Gandhi's 'much-vaunted regard for Truth' is—you have guessed it right!—Miss Katherine Mayo! Her *Mother India* produced quite a progeny of sons and daughters and even a father of India! Gandhi himself took part in the controversy that followed the book, which Nichols has raked up to present what he considers to be a cast-iron case to indict Gandhi as a liar. Further comments on this are reserved for the next chapter, which is entirely

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 158.

devoted to an examination of the case—and also of Nichols's own veracity.

Then there is the *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances* and similar other publications sponsored by Sir Richard Tottenham of the Government of India which Nichols has used with considerable dexterity to dispose of Gandhi's non-violence as "a violent humbug." This *ex parte* evidence will also be reviewed at some length in a later chapter. Suffice it to say for the present that two Right Honourable Members of His Majesty's Privy Council, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. M. R. Jayakar, have declared the government 'indictment' to be of no judicial value whatever !

Similar will be the legal opinion about the partisan views of Mr. M. A. Jinnah ("the potential emperor of Pakistan") and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar ("one of the seven best brains in India") quoted by Nichols. As leaders of rival political parties, both Jinnah and Ambedkar have necessarily to be critical of Gandhi and the Congress, and their accusations can convict Gandhi as much as the vituperations of a Bevin can do Churchill or *vice versa*.

Then there is M. N. Roy ("The Karl Marx of India") and the Radical Democratic Party, which was begotten by M. N. Roy and has been brought up as a foster-child by the Government of India. It is designed to play the same role against the militant labour movement in India which the Muslim League is doing vis-a-vis the Congress. The 13,000 rupees a month which M. N. Roy has been receiving as a

subsidy for his Party from the Indian exchequer is one of the more unsavoury episodes of political patronage and war propaganda conducted by the Government of India.

Not that the bureaucracy has any love lost for this ex-revolutionary. The first thing that they did to him after his return or rather the discovery of his return to India after a prolonged and eventful sojourn in Russia, China, and, if I am not mistaken, in South America, was to clap him into prison for a pretty long term. He had broken with the Communist International long before that and in fact was treated as a traitor to the cause. The only persons who befriended him in India were Congressmen. After his release, Roy joined the Congress and even made a typical bid for its leadership. When it failed ignominiously, he seceded from the Congress and founded the Radical Democratic Party with a handful of members. They are known as Royists—a term which orthodox Indian Communists spit out with the same contempt as the Soviet comrades did the word ‘Trotskyites.’

Since the war began, Roy has found himself on velvet not merely because of the 13,000 rupees a month but because, thanks to official backing, he has secured recognition for his upstart clique even in the World Trade Union Congress! In return, Royists have done their bit for propaganda by touring abroad to inform the British and American people that the Congress is a camarilla of reactionaries, capitalists and Fascists—much for the same purpose

in fact for which Nichols voyaged in the reverse direction !

No wonder Nichols has freely drawn upon the voluminous writings of M. N. Roy and the other publications of the Radical Democratic Party. Roy is indeed a great asset to British propaganda. In this connection the following questions and answers in the House of Commons (February 22, 1945) will be found instructive :

Major-General Sir Alfred Knox (Con.) asked :  
“ Has Mr. Amery considered the statement made at a meeting in Washington by Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit that India is a vast concentration camp and a country without religious differences, and does he propose to take steps to counteract the powerful effect that such statements may have on public opinion among our Allies ? ”

Mr. Amery replied : “ Yes, Sir, I have seen the statement referred to. I have no doubt that both the Indian Agent-General and the British Information Services in Washington will take whatever steps they judge necessary to deal with the matter.

Major-Gen. Knox : “ Do our Information Services take any steps to make the public wiser on the subject ? ”

Mr. Amery : “ Yes, I think our Information Services in Washington are doing very good work.”

Earl Winterton (Con.) : “ Are steps being taken by the Information Department to publish leaflets and statements by Mr. Roy and others on the actions of the Congress Party, which, they say, is run by the

most reactionary employers and big financiers in India ? ”

Mr. Amery : “ I will make inquiries.”

Mr. Sorensen (Lab.) : “ Is Mr. Roy, to whom Earl Winterton refers, the one who received a £12,000 subsidy from the Indian Government ? ”

Mr. Amery : “ I have already dealt with that point.”

A man is known by the company he keeps and a writer can be judged by the authorities he quotes. So far it has been a miserable list of witnesses which Nichols has secured to support the verdict, even if we add our old friend, T. A. Raman, to it. He, therefore, coolly proceeds to trump up evidence. He picks up some obscure, flyblown pamphlet from the nearest book-stall and quotes it as if it were the authorized version of the Congress bible. He ignores the large number of books written by distinguished Indian and foreign authors and seeks some sensation-mongering tripe, whose author he slyly uses as a cats-paw to damn the Congress and Gandhi.

For instance, Nichols cites a book called *The Iron Dictator* and immediately boosts it to the skies without so much as mentioning its author or publisher—a discreditable trick which he has played more than once, probably in order to prevent the interested reader from having access to the book referred to and thus calling his bluff. We are told : “ *The Iron Dictator* has had a very wide sale in India ; you see it on nearly every book-stall. It has frequently been recommended to me by Congress enthusiasts ; it may

be fairly taken as representing the average Congress mentality in the same way that Rosenberg's theories are representative of the Nazi philosophy."<sup>1</sup>

Having to do something with the reading and reviewing of books, I was fairly flabbergasted by this statement. How could one have missed such an important publication? Shamefacedly I began a search for it from library to library, book-shop to book-shop :

" Have you got a copy of *The Iron Dictator* ? "

" By whom ? "

" Er. .by the Congress Rosenberg."

" By *whom* ? "

This little conversation piece was repeated a score of times, and I had almost given up all hopes of locating the *magnum opus*, when accidentally I came across a copy in a circulating library. It had lost its dust cover, so melodramatically described by Nichols, and was rebound, but otherwise in good shape, except for a few comments scribbled by readers. The very first I noticed ran : " Dear Reader, Read this book with a grain of salt ! "

The author of *The Iron Dictator* is not able even to spell his hero's name correctly ' Vallabhai ' for Vallabhbhai Patel is a mistake frequently committed by foreigners; but inexcusable in an Indian biographer. Nor is this the only mistake of its type. In fact the names of most Congress leaders are spelled wrongly in *The Iron Dictator*. A few instances : Dr. "Pittabhai" (for Pattabhi) Sitaramayya p. 33, " Rajendar

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 162.

Parshad" (for Rajendra Prasad) p. 64, "Bulabbahai" (for Bhulabhai) Desai p. 112.

I am sure the reader's curiosity has by now become as keen as was mine then and so let me provide the full details of the book. Here's the title-page :

## THE IRON DICTATOR

A Biographical Study

of

Gandhi's Greatest General

Sirdar Vallabhai Patel

by

The author of the

"*Red Star of the East*"

Hero Publications,

6, Lower Mall, Lahore.

The Congress Rosenberg is still eluding us. On looking through an advertisement at the end, however, one notes that he is one Hira Lal Seth, described as "an ex-terrorist prisoner who has an odyssey of his own (and) first came into limelight in connection with the Red Assassins (Car Burning) case in the Punjab."

So one realizes now why Nichols avoided to mention the author of a rag to which he has devoted two and a half pages (162-164) of his precious *Verdict*. Even the dear old ladies of Mayfair will refuse to swallow an ex-terrorist, who does not know his spelling, as an authority on the Congress philosophy. Hira Lal Seth's *Iron Dictator* no more represents 'the average Congress mentality' than Havelock Ellis's *Studies in*



*the Psychology of Sex* represents the mentality of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Another pamphlet which Nichols notices at some length is *Fifty Facts About India* which purports to be a reply to the British Information Services' publication referred to earlier. Nichols himself makes it clear in a footnote that it is published by Hamara Hindustan Publications, Bombay, though he again avoids the name of its author. Its title-page, however, declares in bold letters that it is "Edited by Some Students," which I personally know to be a fact. Yet, he has no scruples in describing this schoolboy production "as one of the most widely circulated of all *Congress* publications" before berating it thus: "As an example of barefaced lying it has never been matched, nor even approached, by Dr. Goebbels."<sup>1</sup>

Lying, it appears, can be of two varieties: barefaced and not so barefaced. In the latter one has to lift the *burqua* under which it is artfully hidden.

Nichols naturally provides a few extracts from the *Fifty Facts* to substantiate his charge. *Verdict On India* teems with such quotations, mis-quotations, half-quotations, quotations torn from their context, and quotations slyly imputed to a source from which they are not taken. Nichols is not only master of the twin arts, *sæppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*, but he can even concoct evidence as he has done with *The Iron Dictator*.

It is upon such partisan witnesses and highly dubious evidence that the pinchbeck Daniel has

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 232.

passed his Verdict on India. It would be as fair to convict Gandhi and the Congress of a Fascist dictatorship on such coloured and biassed testimony as to convict the late President Roosevelt of having betrayed the Constitution and tricked himself into the Fourth Term on the evidence of the election speeches of Republican leaders, the editorials in the Hearst Press, the accusations of Lewis, the Labour boss, the revelations of Drew Pearson and Colonel McCormick, and an interview with Falla the Scottie, who was the inseparable companion of F.D.R. during the closing years of his life !

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## CHAPTER VII

### TRIAL OF BEVERLEY NICHOLS

EVERY Indian schoolboy knows "The Drain Inspector's Report." Most of us had forgotten Miss Mayo before Nichols revived her memory, but Gandhi's description of her *Mother India* has become a synonym for all such books.

Nichols instinctively knew that *Verdict On India* would be assailed as another Drain Inspector's Report by Indian critics. He therefore adopted the bold plan of making Gandhi's criticism of *Mother India* itself the basis of his own attack on the Mahatma's reputation as a truthful person. Attack is the best defence in propaganda as in warfare and I rather admire Nichols for his strategy.

The first four pages of the chapter "Heil Hindu" launch a concentrated barrage on "The Drain Inspector's Report," which, originally, was the title of Gandhi's review of *Mother India*. Nichols subjects it to a seemingly searching analysis and, after making a number of allegations against Gandhi, delivers himself of the following verdict :

"The Drain Inspector's Report is a museum piece for all students of the Gandhi mind. It is a masterpiece of evasion, duplicity, and false implication. And it is completely typical of the man who, by reiterating the word 'Truth' until it sounds like the squawk of a parrot, has bluffed half the

world into believing that the tinsel with which his own hands have crowned himself, is, in very truth, a halo of divine radiance.”<sup>1</sup>

Now this is really a grave accusation to level whether against a Mahatma or a mouse. It is true that the clever literary artist that Nichols is, and probably to err on the safe side of the law of torts, he has nowhere directly called Gandhi a liar, but he has thoroughly rubbed the damning impression in the mind of the ignorant foreign or even the superficial Indian reader.

All these allegations and charges therefore deserve our closest scrutiny. If they are substantiated, Nichols's verdict on Gandhi as a habitual Hindu liar will have to be upheld. If, on the other hand, they are not, it will be Nichols who will emerge as a liar—and rather a dastardly British liar at that! Let us therefore frame the issues of the case and submit them to a jury of the readers. Let us, in fact, stage a literary trial and call up all the principal parties before the jury. Even Miss Mayo will be invoked from the other world to give her evidence.

The issues are clear-cut and in fairness to Nichols we will accept them as drawn by himself, except that they are suitably summarised and rearranged for the purpose of the trial.

*Issue No. 1* : Mr. Gandhi wrote in his review of *Mother India* : “ I do not remember having given the message Miss Mayo imputes to me, and the only one present who took any notes at the time has no recol-

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 158.

lection of the message imputed to me." How far is this statement true or justifiable ?

*Issue No. 2 :* In the same review, appears the following as quoted by Nichols : " She has described the visit to me and informed her readers that there are *always* with me two secretaries who write down *every word* I say . . . this statement is not true."

Did Gandhi interpolate the word ' always ' in the text of Miss Mayo, merely to accuse her of an untruth ? If the answer is in the affirmative, is not Mr. Gandhi himself guilty of a falsehood ?

*Issue No. 3 :* Miss Mayo described an ovation given to the Prince of Wales in Bombay in 1921, which Mr. Gandhi has denied altogether. Mr. Nichols considers this as challenging not merely Miss Mayo but history itself and has reproduced an extract from *The Times of India* describing the event. What are the facts and who is the liar ?

*(The issues are presented to the Jury who take their seats. The presiding authority will be the Foreman of the Jury.)*

*The Foreman :* Mr. Beverley Nichols, your verdict on Mr. Gandhi has been impeached and put before this jury of readers. The proceedings are rather unusual but not more unusual than your constituting yourself as the prosecutor and judge rolled in one. I assure you that our sole aim is to pursue the ends of justice. It will help that cause if you vacate the chair and present yourself in the box.

*Nichols :* Certainly. With pleasure.

*(Mr. Beverley Nichols takes the witness box.)*

*Counsel* : I take it that you agree to the issues which are based upon your own findings. While we will take them one by one, we will also have to determine how far your verdict as a whole is warranted by the facts—not as you have presented them but as they really are ! Now will you be good enough to explain on what grounds you have accused Mr. Gandhi of having strayed from truth ? I have to use this roundabout expression because I see that you have astutely avoided using the word liar.

*Nichols* : My specific charges against Mr. Gandhi are set forth in the three issues which are before the Gentlemen of the Jury. But, generally speaking, “ as an example of the work of a man who professes so high a regard for ‘ Truth,’ the Drain Inspector’s Report is, to say the least of it, suprising.”<sup>1</sup>

*Counsel* : I should request you to stick to the issues and not rush with your comments, Mr. Nichols. Let us take issue number one. (*Reads it*). Can you lead any evidence to disprove Mr. Gandhi’s statement ?

*Nichols* : (*Reading from Verdict On India, p. 159*)

“ Unfortunately—most unfortunately for the Hindu George Washington—irrefutable documentary evidence exists to prove that this message which Gandhi and his associates so suddenly and so conveniently forgot, was not only given, but revised and approved by Gandhi himself, typed by his secretary, signed by himself, and dispatched to the authoress with a covering letter . . . beginning, ironically enough, ‘ Dear Friend ? ’

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 158.

"A photograph of this damning letter, signed by Gandhi, is reproduced in *After Mother India* by H. H. Field, p. 29."

*Counsel*: That would do for the present, Mr. Nichols. I would like now to call Miss Mayo.

(*Miss Katherine Mayo takes the witness box.*)

*Counsel*: Miss Mayo, your book provoked very caustic reactions in India, didn't it? All the reviewers vied with one another in exposing its various inaccuracies, to put it no more than that.

*Miss Mayo*: Yes. Nor was it in the least unexpected! But it received many flattering notices, too, and Mr. Gandhi himself has paid a grudging tribute to it at the end of his review. Allow me to quote it: "*Mother India* is a book that every Indian can read with some degree of profit. We may repudiate the charge as it has been framed by her, but we may not repudiate the substance underlying the many allegations she has made. It is a good thing to see ourselves as others see us."<sup>1</sup>

*Counsel*: Why, that's curious! Reading *Verdict On India*, one gets the impression that Gandhi's review of your book was a farrago of vile abuse and 'false implication' from beginning to end. But here is Gandhi acknowledging the substance underlying your allegations. It is amazing that Nichols, while quoting a number of extracts from "the Drain Inspector's Report," has ignored a relevant passage which does as much credit to you as to Gandhi. It seems to be

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, September 15, 1927, also reproduced in *After Mother India*, p. 25.

clearly a case of *suppressio veri*. But we will look into it later on. Tell us, Miss Mayo, what personal grouse you have against Mr. Gandhi—apart from his criticism, for he should have as much liberty to express his opinion as you yours.

*Miss Mayo* : Most gladly. In the first place, Mr. Gandhi coolly denied that he gave me a message at all !

Now this was unfair and wholly untrue for I had the corrected and expanded report of the interview, with a covering letter, under Mr. Gandhi's own signature. This is the type-script of which Mr. Field has published a facsimile and which Mr. Nichols has used with such devastating effect to impugn Mr. Gandhi's veracity.

*Counsel* : Wait a minute, Miss Mayo. Will you, in the first place, kindly tell us what that message was ?

*Miss Mayo* : Certainly. I cannot do better than read out the relevant portion from *Mother India* itself. (Page 201, English edition). Listen :

“What is my message to America ?” he (Gandhi) repeated, in his light, dispassionate, even voice. “My message to America is the hum of this spinning wheel.”

“Then he speaks at length, slowly with pauses. And as he speaks the two young men, his secretaries, lying over their slant-topped desk, write down every word he says.

“The wheel hums steadily on. And the thread it spins for America appears and reappears in the pages of this book.”



*Counsel* : Go on, Miss Mayo.

*Miss Mayo* : That's all.

*Counsel* : How can that be, Miss Mayo ? Just one sentence of ten words ? Was that all the message he gave you ? What Nichols calls " the damning letter " seems to be pretty long even in the facsimile.

*Miss Mayo* : Yes, but that was all I used !

*Counsel* : It couldn't be, in sheer fairness. Let me refresh your memory, Miss Mayo. Here's the issue of *Young India*, the journal which Mr. Gandhi was editing then, dated February 2, 1928, in which the whole message is reproduced. It occupies quite some space.

*Miss Mayo* : I know. But then I really used only the first sentence as the message.

*Counsel* : Amazing, Miss Mayo. Mr. Gandhi spared so much time from his multifarious activities to give you an interview. Not merely that but he took the trouble of revising, amplifying and typing out the report of the interview, which was important in his eyes as it contained a message to America. And yet you slaughtered it wholesale and, like a Red Indian savage, kept merely the scalp as a memento ! Even the single sentence you have used does not seem to have been reproduced faithfully.

I'm afraid you were guilty of unpardonable levity, Miss Mayo, not merely towards Mr. Gandhi but towards your own people, in thus atrociously truncating his message. And yet when, during a busy tour, Mr. Gandhi came across your book and failed to recognize the scalp as the " message " he had given

more than a year earlier, you accuse him constructively (and Nichols with whoops of joy) of lying ! Not only did you amputate the message, but you further attempted to parody it. It is neither good reportage nor good manners.

What say you to this, Mr. Nichols ?

*Nichols* : I am not concerned either with Miss Mayo's reportage or her manners. The fact remains that Mr. Gandhi did give a message to Miss Mayo and subsequently denied it altogether ! I stay here on my bond. It is a *lapsus memoriæ* which " somewhat invalidates his claim for the Washington Stakes."<sup>1</sup>

*Counsel* : I never knew Mr. Gandhi was in the running for the Washington Stakes, Mr. Nichols. Besides such a sneer comes ill from the author of *Verdict On India* which is reeking with lapses—not merely of memory but from truth. To take a single example you have stated not once but twice over (pages 183 and 240) that the Koran is written in the Persian script, which is as true as saying that the Bible was dictated by Jesus Christ in Esperanto ! You profess to have devoted " over a year's intensive study " for producing such masterpieces of *lapsus memoriæ*, while Gandhi wrote his review of *Mother India* in the midst of a hundred other preoccupations during the course of a whirlwind tour of South India. If that is all you have to say in support of your allegation, the Gentlemen of the Jury need not even retire to give their verdict—upon *you*, Mr. Nichols.

*Nichols* : But I have plenty more evidence to lead

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 159.

against Mr. Gandhi, even if he be acquitted on this particular count. Besides you are forgetting that there are two other issues to be disposed of yet.

*Counsel* : Thank you for nothing, for I was just taking them up. (*Reads Issue No. 2*). What have you to say to this, Mr. Nichols ?

*Nichols* : Merely that Miss Mayo never made the statement Mr. Gandhi complains of. "Mr. Gandhi (himself) made it; the word 'always' is his own invention. He employs the customary Hindu ruse of inserting little words into the mouths of his opponents and then challenging them. Miss Mayo courteously referred him to the text, to point out his delicate emendation of her words. Needless to say Gandhi did not acknowledge her letter."<sup>1</sup>

*Counsel* : Steady-ho Mr. Nichols ! You are again rushing with your comments without making sure of your facts. On verifying your quotation from Mr. Gandhi (as cited in Issue No. 2) with the original, I find that you have subjected it to—shall we say?—a delicate emendation of your own ! Where you have put the three innocent dots, there appear the following material words : "*I know this is not a wilful perversion of facts.*" Nevertheless," which give a different complexion to Mr. Gandhi's observation.

Again Mr. Gandhi was not quoting Miss Mayo, hence there was no question of inventing any little words and inserting them in her text. He was merely contradicting in his own words Miss Mayo's imputation about the secretaries and I don't consider that the

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 160.

use of the word *always* makes any material difference to the tenor of his argument. It certainly doesn't warrant the hullabaloo you have raised about it.

Besides, who told you that Miss Mayo referred Mr. Gandhi to the text and that the latter did not acknowledge her letter?—Mr. Gandhi, Miss Mayo or—Herr Hitler?

*Nichols* : Now it is you who is sneering. However I may tell you that none of these persons enlightened me on this point. It was Mr. Harry H. Field, to whose book *After Mother India* I have referred the reader for a fuller account of this affair in the footnote on page 158.

*Counsel* : The Gentlemen of the Jury must have doubtless noticed that footnote. So perhaps it will be helpful in ascertaining the truth if we now call Mr. Field.

(*Mr. Harry Hubert Field takes the witness-box*)

*Counsel* : Mr. Field, your book *After Mother India* has been cited as a conclusive evidence to prove that Mr. Gandhi is an untruthful person. You are said to have carefully studied all the controversy that centred over *Mother India* and that, as a matter of fact, your book was written to examine the charges levelled against Miss Mayo.

*Field* : That's right.

*Counsel* : You have devoted a whole chapter to a discussion of the 'Drain Inspector's Report.' What are the conclusions you arrived at?

*Field* : I have examined at length the four specific charges levelled by Mr. Gandhi against Miss Mayo

and refuted them as not capable of standing close examination and as of no public moment.

*Counsel*: Is that all? It sounds rather a tame conclusion. You have nowhere said, for example, that Gandhi is a liar or that his review was "a masterpiece of evasion, duplicity or false implication"?

*Field*: No! I have nowhere directly accused Mr. Gandhi of lying. Anyway, I shouldn't be saddled with Mr. Nichols's observations.

*Counsel*: Certainly not. On reading your book carefully, however, I am struck by a singular omission—if not deliberate suppression. You have quoted extensively from Mr. Gandhi's review and from Miss Mayo's reply to it in the *Liberty* magazine of January 14, 1928. But you nowhere refer to Mr. Gandhi's rejoinder to the letter published in *Young India* on February 2, 1928 under the heading, "Miss Mayo Again," immediately after the issue of *Liberty* was available in this country. Your book was published in 1929 and you have incorporated in it extracts from *Young India* itself of as late as March 21, 1929, while you have suppressed a document which was of the utmost importance to the controversy.

I am sorry to have to say, Mr. Field, that your so-called refutation of Mr. Gandhi's charges against Miss Mayo is, consequently, not worth the paper on which it is written. Only it has led Mr. Nichols up the garden path.

*(The witness remains silent.)*

*Counsel*: Only one more question, Mr. Field.

May I know what exactly actuated you to write *After Mother India*?

*Mr. Field* : I have explained it in the last paragraph of my Foreword to the book : " My motive in writing is the outgrowth of having assisted in the editing of *Mother India* and of having closely followed its history, from its inception."

*Counsel* : Quaintly put, but very interesting. Have you anything else to say, which might be of use ?

*Field* : Nothing, Sir.

*Counsel* : Thank you, Mr. Field. You may retire now.

Gentlemen of the Jury, there seems to be a conspiracy between Miss Mayo and Messrs. Field and Nichols to hide Mr. Gandhi's rejoinder to Miss Mayo from the public eye. As it is highly relevant to our present inquiry, I would like to call Mr. Gandhi.

(*Mr. Gandhi steps into the witness box.*)

*Counsel* : Mr. Gandhi, excuse us for the troubles we are putting you to. I know that you are too great a man to bother about the aspersions cast upon you by Mr. Nichols. But thousands of persons in India and abroad who read his *Verdict On India* are likely to be puzzled, pained and even misled by his sweeping accusations against you, if they are allowed to remain unrepplied. In this age of propaganda, truth unfortunately is not its best defence. Therefore, you owe it, if not to your calumniators, to the public at large and 'our American friends' in particular, to give your version of the case.

*Gandhi* : Now that you have dragged me here, I

suppose I must. What exactly do you want from me ?

*Counsel* : We will take Issue Number One. What say you to it ?

*Gandhi* : Little more than what has already been revealed during the course of this trial. " Miss Mayo's adherence to the statement that I did give her the message she ascribes to me "—which Nichols has exploited so ingeniously—proves her to be guilty of gross suppression of truth. She seems to have thought that I would not have a copy of the corrected interview between her and me. Unfortunately for her I happen to possess a copy of her notes. Here is the full quotation referring to the hum of the wheel.

To save the time of this court, I shall read out only its concluding portion : " Our movement is summed up in the spinning wheel with all its implications. It is to me a substitute for gun-powder—for it brings the message of self-reliance and hope to the millions of India, and when they are really awakened, they would not need to lift their little finger in order to regain their freedom. The message of the spinning wheel is, really, to replace the spirit of exploitation by the spirit of service. The dominant note in the West is the note of exploitation. I have no desire that my country should copy that spirit or that note."

"The first sentence only of the foregoing message which Miss Mayo quotes without the most important commentary on it, is intended to ridicule me. But the whole paragraph, I hope, makes my meaning and message clear and intelligible. I wrote my article on

her book while I was travelling. Had I had the notes before me, I should have quoted from them, and thus added force to my article (Drain Inspector's Report)."<sup>1</sup>

*Counsel* : Thank you, Mr. Gandhi, for the straightforward explanation. Now we will take Issue Number Two—the one about your secretaries.

*Gandhi* : "Miss Mayo's reference to my secretaries is a clever attempt to hoodwink the unwary reader. All that could be inferred from my repudiation of the statement that I had two secretaries (whether *always* or not, is not the point), is that Miss Mayo was at least a careless writer if not a wilful perverter of truth. But the manner in which she described the secretaries leaves the reader under the belief that I have always two secretaries.

"Having no case, Miss Mayo has followed the method of the pettifogging lawyer who vainly tries to discredit a hostile but unshakable witness by making him state things from memory which might be found on verification to be not quite accurate. It gives me pain to have to say that her article in *Liberty* proves her to be not only an unreliable writer but an unscrupulous person devoid of the sense of right and wrong."<sup>2</sup>

*Counsel* : That will do. Mr. Gandhi. I don't think I shall have to trouble you for Issue Number 3. Your evidence must have proved most helpful to the Gentlemen of the Jury.

It is really amazing, however, that such a stinging

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, February 2, 1928.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



rejoinder should have been suppressed, successively, by Miss Mayo, Mr. Field and Mr. Nichols. In fairness to Miss Mayo, she should have another opportunity to explain herself :

(*Miss Katherine Mayo takes the witness box.*)

*Counsel* : Miss Mayo, I am sorry to trouble you once again, but it would be really in your own interest to take cognizance of Mr. Gandhi's strictures upon you. How do you account for your failure to notice his reply ?

*Miss Mayo* : If you read my article in *Liberty*, you will find that I have myself called the subject matter of my contradiction 'a trivial quibble.' I did not, therefore, think it worthwhile to pursue the quibble further.

*Counsel* : But it was exactly in order to clear all such quibbles—and, incidentally, your own reputation!—that a whole volume "*After Mother India*" was written, on which, in his turn, Mr. Nichols has based his verdict on Mr. Gandhi ! It was a strange quest of truth, indeed, which made Mr. Field suppress such incriminating evidence against you. By the way, Mr. Field talks of "the outgrowth of having assisted in the editing of *Mother India*"—words which sound rather vague. Can you kindly tell us what exactly they mean ?

*Miss Mayo* : Why, I have already explained it in my Foreword to *Mother India*. Let me quote its last paragraph : "I may express my deep indebtedness to my friends, Miss M. Moyca Newell and Harry Hubert Field, the one for her constant and invaluable

collaboration, the other for a helpfulness, both in India and here, beyond either limits or thanks."

*Foreman of the Jury* : What ? Will you kindly repeat that, Miss Mayo ?

*(Miss Mayo re-reads the paragraph.)*

*Counsel* : My sainted aunt ! Pardon this unjudicial expression ; Gentlemen of the Jury, but this means that this Mr. Field was only the assistant drain inspector of Miss Mayo. It's a good game, Mr. Nichols. In the first place, you accuse Mr. Gandhi of lying on the strength of the " Drain Inspector's Report." And you seek to substantiate your charge by referring your readers for " a fuller account of this affair " to the Assistant Drain Inspector's book—all the while suppressing the fact that Mr. Field was only an accomplice of Miss Mayo !

You cannot convict a cockroach of being a liar on such worthless testimony, let alone a man like Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Nichols, you have in fact proved yourself, in the words applied by Mr. Gandhi to Miss Mayo, not only an unreliable writer but an unscrupulous person devoid of the sense of right and wrong.

*Nichols* : I'm sorry . . . I mean to say that Miss Mayo and Mr. Field have let me down rather badly. Shockingly badly in fact. However, it is not on such Yankee witnesses that I have based my third indictment. Thank God for that !

*Counsel* : I was thinking of being charitable to you and letting that issue drop quietly, in view of your present pitiable plight. However, you are welcome to proceed with it.

*Nichols* : You bet I will ! For, in connection with the visit of the Prince of Wales to Bombay in 1921, " Mr. Gandhi not only challenged Miss Mayo, he challenged history itself. The whole Press, not only of India but of Britain and the U.S., was plastered with pictures and accounts of the ovation to the Prince of Wales which was so spectacular that it made a first-class news-story. Here is how the *Times of India* described the events.

(*Reads an extract.*)

" Now at the time, Mr. Gandhi was trying to organize a boycott of the Royal visit. And so it is difficult to believe that he can have remained in total ignorance of this demonstration (described in the extract). Yet that is what he *does* ask-us to believe. Moreover, he bluntly implies (in the Drain Inspector's Report) that it never happened at all.

" So that if we are to believe Mr. Gandhi, on this occasion we can only do so by assuming either that he was under a very lengthy anæsthetic or in a state of protracted trance."<sup>1</sup>

*Counsel* Have you done, Mr. Nichols ? I had rather hoped that your experience during this trial might have sobered you, that it might have taught you to make sure of your facts before barging in with your judgment.

*Nichols* (Triumphantly) I *have* made sure of my facts as well as my judgment, and I only hope you don't challenge history *a la* Mahatma. Was it a trance or an unæsthetic, Mr. Counsel ?

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, pp. 159-60.

*Counsel* : Are you aware, Mr. Nichols, that the visit of the Prince of Wales was boycotted throughout India and that a *hartal* was observed wherever he went ? No doubt he received official ovations but to say that they were spontaneous and sensational outbursts of public welcome is a gross exaggeration. Perhaps it will interest you to learn that both Hindus and Muslims had joined the boycott and it was the Muslims who observed it the more militantly. Here is a record of his visit to Bombay, which both Miss Mayo and you have played up so much : “ The very day of his arrival in Bombay there were not merely clashes and conflicts, but rioting and bloodshed which extended over three or four days, resulting in the death of 53 persons, and the wounding of 400 approximately.”

*Nichols* : Which book are you quoting from ?

*Counsel* : *The History of the Congress* by Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya.

*Nichols* : You will be quoting next *The Fairy Tales* by the brothers Grimm ! Listen, Mr. Counsel, why don't you accept the extract from the *Times of India* as a conclusive evidence ? “ It is hardly an irresponsible journal and (in case you don't know) one of the three papers which Gandhi reads every day.”<sup>1</sup>

*Counsel* : All right. Let it be as you say, though I have my own reservations about Anglo-Indian papers. Now when did ‘ the outstanding event ’ occur ? It is a pity that a veteran author like you does not provide the references necessary to authenticate your quota-

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 159.

tions—an omission which does not seem to be purely accidental. Perhaps your friend, the Assistant Drain Inspector, can help us.

*Nichols* : Let's look him up. Yes, Mr. Field refers to "a contemporaneous newspaper report in the *Times of India*, Bombay, dated November 24, 1921, and quotes it *in extenso*. Are you satisfied now? What is yours?—Anæsthetic or trance?

*Counsel* : Don't be so cock-a-hoop, Mr. Nichols. Not yet! Here I have got the November 1921 file of the *Times of India* for the scrutiny of the Gentlemen of the Jury. Fortunately old files of the *Times of India* are available in the principal Indian libraries, apart from the *Times of India* office itself. We will open it at date 24 . . .

In the name of Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David, now the Duke of Windsor, whom God bless! There is no report as quoted by you that day. The Prince of Wales was, as a matter of fact, in Baroda then and there are descriptions of state pageantries there!

*Nichols* : Perhaps it is a provincial edition you have got hold of, what, I believe, you call the Dak. So look up the issue of the 23rd November, please!

*Counsel* : Sure. I propose to check up all the issues of the *Times of India* since the Prince of Wales stepped on the Gateway of India until he was a thousand miles away from there. Day by day. Page by page. Column by column. Line by Line. Listen to the headlines :

*Friday, November 18, 1921—*

India's Guest. Bombay Greets the Prince.

Riots in Bombay. 13 Deaths Reported.

*Saturday, November 19, 1921—*

Prince's Visit. Social Engagements.

Bombay riots. More Assaults.

*Monday, November 21, 1921—*

Poona's Welcome. Mahratta Enthusiasm.

Bombay Riots. Calcutta Precautions

*Tuesday, November 22, 1921—*

Among the People. The Prince's Democratic Day.

Bombay Riots. Peacemakers Busy.

*Wednesday, November 23, 1921—*

The Last Day. University Senate's Address.

Bombay Normal. No More Rioting !

*Thursday, November 24, 1921—*

The Royal Tour. Reception at Baroda.

Unlawful Association. U. P. Government's Precautions.

I think this should be enough. Here are all the descriptions of the arrival in and departure from Bombay and these are the accounts of the happenings in between. The Gentlemen of the Jury will, I trust, thoroughly satisfy themselves that the passage which Nichols has allegedly quoted as from the *Times of India* on page 159 of his *Verdict On India* is nowhere to be found in the source. It is a downright fabrication.

Beverley Nichols, this is sufficient to prove you guilty of deliberate lying, of cooking up evidence to support your allegations, and, in fact, of fabricating history itself ! Your crime is doubly heinous because

you sought with the help of such falsehoods to besmire the reputation of a universally respected person like Mr. Gandhi.

Every allegation you have made against Mr. Gandhi on the testimony of Miss Mayo or Mr. Field or in your own right as a fabricator of history has been disproved ; every little lie of yours has been nailed to the counter.

Thank your stars that Mr. Gandhi is too great a person to take notice of unscrupulous writers like you. The facts presented here should be sufficient to convict any person of libel and defamation in a court of law.

I now formally ask the Gentlemen of the Jury to indict Beverley Nichols, the author of *Verdict On India*, the self-styled Judge, of having prostituted truth and justice for purposes of propaganda.

*(The Jury retire for deliberation, which means that every reader of this book is left to pronounce his or her own judgment on Nichols and his verdict on Mr. Gandhi, after weighing the evidence detailed in this chapter and after making further independent inquiries if so desired.)*

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## CHAPTER VIII

### A PACIFIST TURNS FASCIST

CONVERTS proverbially make the worst bigots and when the war began—please note that it began on different dates for different countries and that even for Britain it did not begin with Chamberlain's declaration on September 3, 1939, but with Hitler's blitz on the Low Countries on May 10, 1940—ex-Fascists became the finest heresy-hunters all over the democratic world.

The friends and admirers, apologists and followers of Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Mosley and Father Coughlin made a scramble to leap on the democratic band-wagon. They waved the flag till their arms ached. They sang the national anthems till their faces became blue. They explained away their old utterances till they looked like professional contortionists. And they started a full-throated hunt for Fifth Columnists so as to drown their own past records as Guilty Men.

The game really got into a swing when the Communists all the world over joined the heresy hunt on June 22, 1941. Till then the war was merely an imperialist scrap to them, which was to be ignored and even opposed by the faithful. I yet vividly remember the endless discussions I had with a certain prominent Indian Communist who used to pay me midnight visits—he was underground then—regarding



the character of the war. He used to bowl me over every time with his battery of historical imperatives—and partly because I was always too sleepy to argue with him. Anyway on that historic day the war was suddenly transformed into a People's War and the radicals and left-wingers all the world over began to sharpen their pencils.

The lid was finally put on the Fascist International when Japan attacked Pearl Harbour and the United States tumbled down the fence. The Isolationists and America Firsters had either to come out openly for freedom and democracy or be branded as fascists and traitors. The intellectuals and æsthetes who had escaped from the Old World found that the armageddon had overtaken them even in the New and they had to do something about it. Their role as Laodiceans and generally superior beings was played out. In the pointed phrase of my mother tongue, every person in the Allied countries had either to show his father or to perform the obsequies! Either he was for the war—in the war—for freedom or was against it, and deserved to be interned as a danger to the State.

There was a new rush on the democratic bandwagon. From Chelsea to Chittagong and from Teheran to Tristan d'Acunha a mighty hunt for heresy was on, those with dubious antecedents themselves naturally being in the leading pack. They had to be, if only to live down their past. They were after the blood of fascists and fifth columnists, of saboteurs and traitors. You could afford to be anything—blue, pink or red, profiteer, drunkard or procurer—anything

but a pro-fascist. That was the greatest ignominy and sin. Even persons who long believed Fascism to be a succulent Italian fowl put on blazing bush-shirts and delivered stirring broadcasts on freedom and democracy. In the Middle Ages one could send one's enemy to the stake by accusing him of being possessed by the Devil. In the early forties you could do its equivalent simply by whispering the word 'Fascist' or 'Fifth Columnist.'

## II

It is to the credit of Beverley Nichols that he long disdained to join this vulgar and opportunistic exhibition. He was after all the author of the famous pacifist book *Cry Havoc!* and of the still more famous *The Fool Hath Said*, which made a stirring plea for Christ's way of life. He could not suddenly desert the Prince of Peace and run after the dogs of war. As late as 1941 he had the courage to profess his faith in pacifism, even while mourning the 'Death of a Pacifist'—or at least of his own pacifism. "Paradoxical as it may sound, this landslide (of pacifism) is neither a proof that pacifists were wrong, nor is it an occasion for encouragement to those cynics who always rejoice when an ideal is 'betrayed' by its adherents. There was nothing wrong with the ideal and it would be foolish to suggest that an ex-pacifist, forming threes in khaki, has betrayed anything whatsoever."<sup>1</sup> Pacifism, rightly summed up Nichols, is more than a code of conduct, it is a mode of life.

1 *Men Do Not Weep*, p. 7.

This was splendid but still more splendid was Nichols's faith in human nature. "He refused to believe—and still refuses to believe—that man is bad. Even when the bombs are falling around him, he does not regard the projectors of those bombs as bad. 'Bad' is a silly, flat word, which should be reserved for eggs. Man is not 'bad.' Man is sick, stupid, misguided, twisted, ignorant, wrongly adjusted, upside down, inside out, anything else you like to say. But man is not 'bad.' And if man is not 'bad,' then even more 76,000,000 men and women (of Germany) are not 'bad.'"<sup>1</sup>

Nichols refused to jettison his faith in human nature even when a German bomb destroyed most of his possessions. "It made not the slightest difference. It would surely be the height of stupidity if it had done so. For what had happened? A number of historical, scientific, geographical and economic accidents had conspired to create a situation where a misguided young man discovered himself in the sky over a certain spot, and where—owing to faulty education—his mind prompted the fingers of his right hand to make a certain action to release an object which happened to destroy a number of things that were precious to me. That was what had happened. To ask the victim to hate the young man in the machine is not only un-Christian, it is downright silly. You might as well ask him to hate the stone on which he cut his foot."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Men Do Not Weep*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

This was an heroic confession of faith in 1941, in the midst of mass bombing and mass hysteria. It is almost in the line of Buddha, Christ, St. Francis of Assisi and, begging Nichols's pardon,—even of Gandhi. And you would naturally trust the man, who refused to hate even the enemy airman whose bomb destroyed most of his possessions, to stand loyally by his own national hero: In case you don't know, I may add that the hero of Beverley Nichols happened to be Sir Oswald Mosley, the founder of the British Union, the Leader of the British Fascists, and the carbon copy of Mussolini and Hitler. From the former he inherited his black shirt, and from the latter the Nazi salute and the Horst Wessel Song.

## III

Before some admirer of Nichols cries *A Hindu Lie!* let me hasten to refer the reader to the last sentence of the last but one chapter of *News of England* by Beverley Nichols, which marks the thrilling climax of the whole book: "He (Mosley) is the only man I know who has in him the qualities of that hero for whom this country has waited so long, and waited in vain."<sup>1</sup> This was a considerable advance on the opinion he had expressed two years earlier: "I am not one of those who belitt'e Mosley, nor do I regard Fascism as an unadulterated evil."<sup>2</sup>

*News of England* or *A Country Without A Hero*

<sup>1</sup> *News of England*, p. 303.

<sup>2</sup> *The Fool Hath Said*, p. 263.

(an alternative title which highlights Nichols's discovery of Hero Mosley), was published in 1938—just a year before the war began. Evidently Nichols had by then developed the greatest admiration for his hero and would have gladly played the British Goebbels to Mosley's Hitler: "Whether you regard him as a limb of Satan or a potential saviour of his nation, Mosley is one of the three most dynamic personalities in the Empire to-day. And the men he has inspired are animated by something akin to a religious faith. Yet he receives less publicity in England than the colour of Miss Marlene Dietrich's finger-nails. It is to remedy this incongruous state of affairs that I am writing this chapter. And for no other reason."<sup>1</sup> Goebbels must have also reasoned on such lines in the early days of National Socialism in Germany.

Nichols gives a thrilling description of his interview with Mosley: "If you had sat with me, in that little room, with the light slowly fading over the grey roofs outside, you would have realized that you were in the presence of a figure of tremendous *importance*. Some will say a figure of great danger, others of great promise. Most will say a figure whom we can ignore. The people who say that are making the biggest mistake of their lives. One of the reasons for Mosley's importance is that he had the courage to admit that there are occasions when a man should follow his instincts in preference to his intellect.

"Mosley said to me: 'Two or three years ago, I

<sup>1</sup> *News of England*, p. 289.

said " I have had enough of the people who think . . . I am going out to get the people who feel." That sentence cost me the friendship of almost all ' Intellectual ' society . . . But I don't regret it. It had cleared the air . . . ' " In the notorious Munich beer hall Hitler must have told similar things to Goebbels about his celebrated intuition.

Nichols's comments on a beflagged map of England which Mosley showed to him are typical : " Each flag represented an organization of British Fascists . . . perhaps not large, certainly not rich, but welded by a religious faith. To that fact I can testify. Anybody who has ever gone to any of the smaller Fascist meetings . . . not the sensational meetings of the Leader but the ordinary gatherings of the rank and file . . . will find himself in the presence of men and women to whom this creed is a matter of life and death."<sup>1</sup> The British Fascist Leader cast such a hypnotic spell over Nichols as to make him believe that " he might even have the genius to find a solution to this (the Jewish) problem, which, remember, has baffled the ingenuity of mankind since the beginnings of history."<sup>2</sup>

The Leader, the Party—and yes, there is the Book—the British version of *Mein Kampf* : " If you are interested," I am again quoting Nichols, " You might read Mosley's own book *The Greater Britain*. Do what you like with it. Riddle it with criticism. Laugh at it. But do not ignore it. For the views it

<sup>1</sup> *News of England*, p. 292.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 302-3.

sets forward are held, with religious conviction, by thousands of Englishmen who are prepared to die for them.”<sup>1</sup> Actually not even a mouse protested when Mosley and his lousy lot were taken into custody in 1940, but this passage strikingly reveals (1) how far Nichols’s fascist leanings had gone and (2) how poor his powers of observation are.

## IV

The admirer of Beverley Nichols will not probably shriek *A Hindu Lie!* now. But he will plead with me that all this was written in 1938 when it was fashionable to flirt with Fascism and to fawn on the Dictators—actual and potential. Why, even Churchill had made flattering references to Hitler and Mussolini (the aforesaid admirer will point out,) and it would be as fair to indict Nichols of being a Fascist on the strength of those quotations as to accuse Churchill of being an appeaser for his ‘kindly words’ towards the dictators. It is hitting a man below the belt to throw his pre-war utterances into his face.

All right. Let us put aside *News of England* or *A Country Without A Hero* (except Mosley!) and pick up his next but one book *Men Do Not Weep*, which was published in 1941, two years after the war began. But here also immediately the curtain goes up Nichols’s *Hero* makes his appearance in the Foreword, albeit in a subdued and guarded manner, even though Mosley was then in jail under Regulation

<sup>1</sup> *News of England*, pp. 296-7.

18B and his British Union of Fascists was outlawed ! Such loyalty, as I said, is really to the credit of Nichols. It is certainly more honourable to sink as a Fascist than to save oneself like a rat. It requires more guts to stand by one's hero, when he is in detention or disgrace, than to join the rabble in a heresy hunt in order to escape the same fate.

So it is with a sneaking admiration that one turns to *Men Do Not Weep* and finds Nichols boldly confessing that at one time or another he was associated with the British Union of Fascists—among other organizations. We have already referred to his regret that Mosley was swept into gaol without a trial. "However, the treachery of Mosley is a matter for the future historian. The ability of Mosley is not . . . Mosley had—and presumably still has—outstanding ability. I have heard many great speakers : Lloyd George at his fiery best, F. E. Asquith . . . I have heard none to touch Mosley. He had also considerable personal courage, and that indefinable quality that can only be called ' leadership.' "<sup>1</sup>

Nichols tells us that he had a wild idea of trying to reform Mosley : " You have such a chance," I used to say to him, " such a golden opportunity, to inspire all without hurting any, to march forward without trampling on a soul. And as far as Germany is concerned, to make friends with all that is good, and gradually to eliminate the bad."<sup>2</sup> What a touching trust in Fascism and its Leader ! The most important

<sup>1</sup> *Men Do Not Weep*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.



thing to note, however, is that this confession of faith was made in 1941. Which, I repeat, was really brave, whatever view you may take of Mosley or Nichols.

## v

So much for the leader of the British Fascists. What about *his* Leader—Adolf Hitler ? What has Nichols to say about him and his Nazi hoodlums ? First that the causes of war were not “ exclusively manufactured by Adolf Hitler.”<sup>1</sup> Historically this is quite correct and Nichols frequently wrote on the iniquity of the Treaty of Versailles—“ the most hideous record that history has ever preserved of man’s inhumanity to man.”<sup>2</sup> “ It is easy to be shocked by the flagrant violation of international treaties by Germany. But we forget that German policy is the direct result of a long series of betrayals, by the allied powers, of every pledge which we gave at the end of the war . . . Those who did not know Germany in 1930 will never feel the sense of abiding shame and horror that we, in the name of democracy and peace, should have played our part in the torture gang of Versailles.

“ We created Hitler. At the instigation of France, of course . . . We made the advent of Hitler not only inevitable but *a part of the common justice of things.*”<sup>3</sup>

This was written in 1938. In 1941 Nichols could not obviously hail his hero’s hero in such blatant terms.

<sup>1</sup> *Men Do Not Weep*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *News of England*, p. 294.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-17 (*Italics mine*).

Then Nichols could only refer to his association with the Anglo-German Fellowship, for which he worked hard.<sup>1</sup> In his Foreword to *Men Do Not Weep* he has dwelt at length on his 'frantic efforts to build a little Anglo-German bridge.' Now the idea is excellent. There can be no natural enmity between two nations or people as there is between the dog and the cat, and the attempt to cement friendship between Englishmen and Germans was entirely laudable. The only snag with the Anglo-German Fellowship was that it was not a fellowship between the two peoples, but between the English appeasers and the Nazi gangsters, between the Cliveden set and the Hitler hierarchy. The two Gollancz publications *Tory M. P.* and *Your M.P.* give the full lowdown on this group of appeasers.

Nichols and others of his ilk did not try to make contacts with the German men and women who were the victims of the Nazis and had either fled the country, like Albert Einstein and Thomas Mann, or who were rotting in concentration camps like Pastor Niemoeller or the nameless others who resisted the tyranny from underground. No, Sir! Nichols and his fellow-members of the Anglo-German Bund hoped to build their little bridge by fawning upon the Fuehrer, by interviewing Dr. Goebbels, by entertaining Ribbentrop—Hitler's Ambassador in Britain who gave the Hitler Salute to King George—and by inviting the Hitler Jugend leaders—the toughs who were trained by Baldur von Schirach to become the standard-bearers of Nazi tyranny and sadism—for a goodwill tour of Britain in September 1938—less

than twelve months before the war ! Don't miss the graphic description of the luncheon given by Nichols at the Garrick Club in honour of those thugs !<sup>1</sup>

The pacifist turned fascist who hailed Mosley as his hero naturally reposed great hope in Hitler and his evil set : " As the clouds darkened, as the speeches of Hitler became more menacing, as the whole programme of Nazi aggression revealed itself as the outrageous thing it was, I still persisted (AND STILL PERSIST)<sup>2</sup> in believing that the actors in that programme *could* learn different parts, *could* speak different lines, if only . . . somebody could 'get at' them. So I tried to 'get at' Germany."<sup>3</sup> No comment is needed on this profession of Nichols's faith except that it was penned in 1941, when the war was in its second year and Hitler had ravaged most of Europe by fire, sword and the Gestapo.

After reading thus far, you need not be surprised if Nichols proceeds to assert—even though it was 1941—that the German Colonial case was sound and reasonable and actually to prove that it was so, *lebensraum* and all : " They (certain complacent Britishers) ignored Germany's pride. Please do not jib at the thought of our enemy daring to lay claim to such an emotion : After all, it is common to all nations. The British call it prestige. The French call it *amour propre*. The Germans hit upon the cumbersome and unattractive phrase 'living-space.' It is not, of course, 'living-space.' It is 'swaggering-space,'

<sup>1</sup> *Men Do Not Weep*, pp. 34-37.

<sup>2</sup> Capitals mine.

<sup>3</sup> *Men Do Not Weep*, p. 23.

and a certain amount of it is necessary to all robust males . . . in which category Germany must certainly be numbered.”<sup>1</sup>

So the search into Nichols’s pacifist-*cum*-fascist past has brought us to the robust male—the blond, Aryan, close-cropped, brown-shirted, goose-stepping, heel-clicking, Heil-Hitlering he-man. This chapter must end here—with the Nordic Robust Male !

<sup>1</sup> *Men Do Not Weep*, pp. 29-30.

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CHAPTER IX

THIS PICTURE AND THAT

It has been hardly an edifying task to follow the descent of Nichols from the Kingdom of God to the Nazi 'swaggering-space,' from the Son of Man who was born a Jew to the Robust German Male, who massacred millions of Jews with cold-blooded, scientific brutality. But this gradual conversion of a pacifist into a fascist is of great significance to the reader of this book. If there is a great progress—or rather regress—from *Cry Havoc!* (1933) to *Men Do Not Weep* (1941), a regular gulf divides the latter from *Verdict On India* (1944).

Something decisive seems to have happened to Nichols in the three years between 1941 and 1944. In the first place he did not publish a single book in all these years, an ominous lapse for a literary exhibitionist like Nichols. Had the rather blatant defence of his hero, detenu Mosley, and the gushing confession of his pre-war appeasement of the Hitler gang brought him into hot water? Did his publisher jib at accepting a manuscript faintly tainted with the fascist ideology? Or did his readers revolt against the stuff usually ladled out by Nichols?

At any rate he could no longer afford his anti-Communist cracks. Soviet Russia was in the war. The United States was in the war. China was in the war. The United Nations were at war. Four-fifths of

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humanity were at war. Democracy and freedom were at war against the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis. The Robust Male of Berchtesgaden and his friends and lackeys all over the world were under sentence of extermination . . .

It was time for Beverley Nichols to go to war, too. On second thoughts he must have decided that it was better to rat than to rot. And like a shrewd general he chose not merely his own terrain to fight on, but even his own enemy to fight against ! Superb strategy ! It would have been, for example, perfectly ludicrous for him to turn into an Ilya Ehrenburg and start writing hymns of hate against the Nazi beasts of prey. It would have been still more absurd for him to imitate ' Cassius ' and stage a *Trial of Mosley*. No, that wouldn't do—not by a long chalk ! He would have to discover fresh fields and pastures new for his literary come-back.

India was the terrain on which the ex-pacifist and erstwhile fascist decided to fight his war for democracy and freedom, and do his bit for good old England. And Gandhi and the Indian National Congress represented the fascist dictatorship he had come to annihilate. India was rather in a tumultuous condition, even though Gandhi and his Congressmen were already behind prison bars. The Indian problem was having world-wide ramifications. Above all, the Indian people were not likely to be aware of his fascist antecedents. The woman of easy virtue who decides to turn a new leaf in her life puts the maximum mileage between her home-town and the new locality

where she has decided to settle down. She must by no chance run the risk of meeting her old beaux !

## II

Now that the reader has become wise to Nichols's past, let us take up his verdict on "Gandhi the dictator, and the Fascist organization which he has created, called Congress, which obeys the slightest crack of his whip."<sup>1</sup> (It is marvellous how quickly Nichols gets into his stride. Though a late-starter and though heavily handicapped by his own fascist flirtations, he is already leading the other dogs of war in the heresy hunt—or should it be the jackals of war ?)

"Congress is the only 100 per cent., full-blooded, uncompromising example of undiluted Fascism in the modern world. Firstly, it is Fascist in principle . . . Just as every Nazi is a superman, so every Brahmin is 'Bhudeva,' which means 'God On Earth.' And Congress is, of course, a predominantly Brahmin organization."<sup>2</sup>

One would expect an author who makes such a serious accusation to substantiate it to the hilt. That, however, is not the way of Nichols. Without bothering to substantiate the first charge, he quickly proceeds to make another in the hope that some at least of the mud he is flinging right and left will stick somewhere. It will be worth our while therefore

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

to see what the fundamental principles of the Congress are. The very first article of its constitution declares :

“ The object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment by the people of India of *Purna Swaraj* (Complete Independence) by all legitimate and peaceful means.” Article two refers to the constituents of the Congress who range from the Primary Members at the lowest level to the Working Committee at the top. In between are four other bodies *each of them elected by the one immediately below it* in a sort of pyramid, with the President forming the apex. Article three declares that “ Any person of the age of 18 years and over and who believes in Article I shall become a primary member and be entitled to be placed on the register of the Congress members.” The annual subscription is four annas (about five pence or six cents).

These first three articles do not need the least elucidation. For lack of space I cannot reproduce the whole Constitution here. I may, however, refer the interested reader to Appendix I of Part II of Professor R. Coupland's “ The Constitutional Problem In India ” (Oxford University Press) among other publications where the text is reproduced in full, to assure himself of the rock-bottom democratic character of the Congress. Perhaps more significant than the Constitution itself is the resolution on Fundamental Rights and Duties which was adopted by the Congress as long ago as 1933. I cannot do better than quote here a few of these Rights.



- (i) Every citizen of India has the right of free expression of opinion, the right of free association and combination and the right to assemble peacefully and without arms, for purposes not opposed to law or morality.
  - (ii) Every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess and practise his religion, subject to public order and morality.
  - (iii) The culture, language and script of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas shall be protected.
  - (iv) All citizens are equal before the law, irrespective of religion, caste, creed or sex.
  - (v) No disability attaches to any citizen, by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed or sex, in regard to public employment, office of power or honour, and in the exercise of any trade or calling.
- \* \* \*
- (viii) No person shall be deprived of his liberty, nor shall his dwelling or property be entered, sequestered, or confiscated save in accordance with law.
  - (ix) The State shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions.
  - (x) The franchise shall be on the basis of universal adult suffrage.

If this Constitution and these Fundamental Rights make the Congress Fascist in principle, my name is

Greta Garbo and I am drawing here a blueprint for the invasion of Mars !

So much for Nichols's first charge. Now let us tackle his little comment that 'the Congress is, of course, a predominantly Brahmin organization.' In the first place, Gandhi, who is alleged by Nichols to be the Congress dictator, is *not* a Brahmin. According to the same learned authority Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is 'Gandhi's greatest general.' He is also *not* a Brahmin, but like Gandhi a Vaisya (tradesman). Last but not least, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress President for the last five years, is not only *not* a Brahmin but not even a Hindu. He is a Muslim ! Nor was the first President of the Congress way back 60 years ago a Brahmin ! He was a Christian. The second one was a Parsi. The third one was a Muslim. The fourth was an Englishman. The fifth (Sir William Wedderburn, who presided once again in 1910) was again an Englishman ! And finally the very birth of the Congress was due to an Englishman, A. O. Hume !

Nichols has drawn an analogy between the Brahmin Congress and the Nazi State which would have been partially true if National Socialism had been founded by Dr. Masaryk of Czechoslovakia, if Hitler had been a Jew, his greatest general, Goering, ditto, and the Nazi Party had an independent President (whose official status was higher than that of the Fuehrer) like, say, Thomas Mann !

According to Dr. Gilbert Murray "The Totalitarian States reject the whole idea of justice or morality between nations and decide all conflicts by the cutting

of throats, not by argument." A Totalitarian State is a permanent dictatorship, a state in which the war neurosis is permanently established. As Goebbels said, "the only instrument with which one can conduct foreign policy is alone and exclusively the sword." The Congress, on the contrary, has utterly abjured the sword. Its very first article enjoins non-violence. Gandhi has declared that "if India takes up the doctrine of the sword, she will cease to be the pride of my heart, even if she may gain momentary victory thereby. That will be the hour of my trial."<sup>1</sup>

From the very beginning of totalitarian aggression—which began not in Europe in the thirties but in Asia in the twenties—Congress had ranged itself uncompromisingly against Fascism. As Nehru said in an article contributed to the *Asia Magazine* (May 1939): "We saw in Fascism the mirror of the Imperialism from which we had suffered, and in the growth of Fascism we saw defeat for freedom and democracy for which we struggled . . . Perhaps nothing is so surprising in India to-day as this anxious interest in foreign affairs and the realization that her own struggle for freedom is a part of the world struggle."

### III

"Secondly, it (the Congress) is Fascist in practice. It is a Gandhi dictatorship . . . Perhaps the clearest

<sup>1</sup> *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 43, and the whole chapter on the gospel of non-violence.

(proof of this assertion) was his personal frustration of the British attempt to introduce responsible Provincial self-Government. The Act of 1935 granted large measures of autonomy to the Provincial Governments ; it was completely negated by the Congress party caucus dominated by Gandhi.”<sup>1</sup>

Let us begin with the last clause of this statement, as it is often repeated even by responsible persons, who point to the Parliamentary Sub-Committee of the Congress Executive as an extra-constitutional body controlling the various provincial ministries and thus introducing a totalitarian regime in India. Sir George Schuster and Guy Wint have made the same charge in their book *India and Democracy*, while Lord Samuel levelled an identical accusation against the Congress in a speech in the House of Lords.<sup>2</sup>

Now in the first place this ‘extra-constitutional’ domination by the party which is in power is a characteristic of all types of government except pure monarchy—where after all the monarch is a one-man party or the State itself. *L’etat c’est moi !* This is true not merely of the totalitarian regimes but also of parliamentary democracy. In Russia the Communist Party itself is the *de facto* government and so was the case with Hitler’s Third Reich. But even in Britain, does not the majority party keep the government strictly in leash ?

Does not the inner caucus of the Party, whether in

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> April 7, 1943.

the Carlton Club or Transport House, lay down the policy to be followed by the Government, which is ostensibly the servant and instrument only of the Commons ? Do not they have their Shadow Cabinets ? Did not Churchill, who always prides himself upon being a ' House of Commons man,' compel the members of Parliament on one notorious occasion to rescind the resolution which they had passed earlier, by making of it an issue of confidence ? And, finally, did not the wirepullers of the Tory party wreck the National Government in their bid for power, while the war against Japan still remained to be won ?

While thousands of American boys were dying in the Pacific, and Europe was in the throes of a rebirth, the British parties indulged in the dog-fight of a General Election. And yet merely because the Congress Working Committee asked the various provincial ministries to resign in October 1939, as a moral protest against Britain's dragging India into the war without so much as " by your leave," it was accused of being a totalitarian ' caucus ' and what not !

True to their crooked propaganda tactics, the Tories raised the cry of ' caucus—caucus ' even against the Labour Party during the last elections. Mr. Amery, who during his regime at the India Office, never lost an opportunity of accusing the Congress of being a totalitarian body, was the loudest in giving vent to his holy ire against the Labour ' caucus.' " The reason why the Socialist leaders did not carry on and finish the job with Mr. Churchill was," he declared in a speech in his constituency, " because they were

not really leaders but only delegates. The Socialist Party is so organized that its nominal leaders are all the time subject to orders not only of a Party Conference, but of a Party Caucus which works behind the scenes and outside Parliament.” (Just like the Indian Congress—he might well have added.) The British electorate has given a stinging retort to this calumny and sent the Tories packing. The Indian electorate will also show its confidence in the Congress ‘Caucus’ in a still more decisive manner when the elections are held here.

The Congress went to the polls in 1936 not in order to work the Constitution but to wreck it. Even while fighting the elections, it did not forget this goal nor its own revolutionary character. It was not interested in provincial autonomy but in national independence. Certain contradictions and conflicts were thus inherent in the situation and they did not take long to come to the surface. After all the electorate had voted not for any particular member but for the Congress as a party.

When Jawaharlal Nehru put forth the bold thesis that ‘it is to the Congress as a whole that the electorate gave allegiance, and it is the Congress that is responsible to the electorate,’ the political purists and pandits were shocked. This constitutional heresy was a simple statement of fact, perfectly understandable against the background of India’s struggle for freedom and justifiable by the objectives of the Congress. Some sort of central direction was necessary if the Congress had not to forfeit its revolutionary

character and lose itself in petty reforms and provincial pursuits.

Yet, paradoxical as it may appear, the 1935 Act was not frustrated. Much to the chagrin of the Robespierres in the Congress, the new constitution was not wrecked. It was worked and worked rather successfully. The various Congress ministries proved themselves to be excellent parliamentarians in spite of the vociferous opposition and the occasional sniping from its own ranks. Nichols gives a totally false impression when he writes that the 1935 Act was negated. On the contrary it was put to the maximum use in the interests of the country. In this connection I cannot do better than quote from Coupland's book, to which a reference has already been made.

In order to provide the right perspective, I may add that Reginald Coupland is not a journalist on the loose but a Fellow of All Souls College and of Nuffield College, and the Beit Professor of Colonial History in the University of Oxford. His *Constitutional Problem In India* is a monumental work of more than 700 closely packed royal octavo pages and was submitted as a Report to the Warden and Fellows of Nuffield College, Oxford. Prof. Coupland spent a long time in India collecting the data for his book and acted as a non-official adviser to Sir Stafford Cripps during his ill-fated mission in 1942. And, finally, the Professor can hardly be described as a friend of the Congress, whom he, too, accuses of having followed a totalitarian policy and having 'practically negated' Provincial

Autonomy ! There is thus a certain piquancy in quoting a distinguished Professor like Coupland not merely against Nichols but also himself. Here is how he sums up the working of the Act of 1935 in his book (Part II, Chapter XIV) :

“ Of the two declared intentions of the Congress, to work the Act and to combat it, the latter fell more and more into the background . . . The (Congress) Governments had more stability than those of any of the non-Congress Provinces except the Punjab . . . With few exceptions, the Congress ministries proved themselves capable and hardworking men with a high sense of public duty and responsibility . . . The Legislatures were well-conducted, hard-working and, except for an increasing tendency to ask unnecessary questions, businesslike . . . Considering the short time legislatures were in session, the amount of legislation they enacted was very large . . . The most important measures were designed to improve the lot of the agricultural masses, and they achieved a substantial measure of success . . . The achievements of the Congress regime, both legislative and administrative, in the field of social reform were its most remarkable feature.

“ These were freely acknowledged on the British side. In his statement of October 17, 1939, Lord Linlithgow paid a tribute to the manner in which the Provinces, Congress and non-Congress alike, had been ‘ conducting their own affairs ’ under the Act of 1935. ‘ That they have done so,’ he said, ‘ on the whole with great success . . . no one can question. Whatever



the political party in power in those Provinces, all can look with satisfaction on a distinguished record of public achievement during the last two-and-a-half-years . . . ' Speaking for the British Government in the House of Commons on October 26, Sir Samuel Hoare contrasted the ' great constitutional success of Provincial Autonomy in India '—and he was clearly alluding to the Congress Provinces as much as the rest—with the breakdown of constitutional government in other parts of the world."

Still the good don would have his joke about the Congress having negated the Act of 1935 ! Not that its failure to do so is a feather in the Congress cap. Rather on the contrary. It was a case of going to scoff and remaining to pray and none can deny that the working of the Act was a complete reversal of the declared objective of wrecking it. And when the Congress ministries did actually resign and negate the Act—at last !—it was not because Gandhi said : " Let there be no ministries." In every province the Legislature concerned had passed a resolution condemning the British Government for dragging India into the war without the consent of the people and for adopting laws and measures ' curtailing the powers and activities of the Provincial Governments ', and calling upon the Government to resign as a protest. The Ministries were constitutionally bound to follow this directive.

If this action was due to the *diktat* of a caucus, why did not the Governors dissolve the legislatures and hold new elections, so as to secure the real verdict

of the electorate? That would have really shown whether the masses were not behind the Congress decision. Naturally the British government dare not take such a constitutional step. They put forth the empty excuse of the war.

Almost all other countries in the world have enjoyed the luxury of war-time elections, but this dish is strictly taboo to the Indian electorate. Even the Central Legislature is dragging on its senile existence, though it is governed not by the Act of 1935 but 1921, with a very restricted franchise and equally restricted powers. It is the British government which is ruling India in a naked totalitarian manner for the last six years, leaving it to professors like Coupland and propagandists like Nichols to accuse the Congress of being a fascist body, of wrecking provincial autonomy, of putting back the clock and what not !

#### IV

It is an amazing fact that though foreign observers entertain different opinions about the Congress, they are all agreed in calling Gandhi a dictator. They don't argue this issue. They make it the first premise of Indian politics. Even a shrewd observer and sincere admirer of Gandhi like Louis Fischer wrote : " There is something of the dictator in him when he wants action. Then he crushes opposition by the weight of his logic and the strength of his popular following. But," Fischer adds quickly, " there is nothing of the

dictator in his thinking. A dictator can never admit he is wrong. Gandhi can : he often does.”<sup>1</sup>

Not only does Gandhi often admit that he is wrong but occasionally he admits that he has committed Himalayan wrongs ! He has never hesitated to retrace his own steps and even to withdraw public movements when he was convinced that he was wrong—not from the strategical but purely from the moral point of view. This has sometimes created considerable confusion, chaos and indignation among his own followers. Now, no person can rise to the dizzy heights of dictatorship on the steps of Himalayan blunders. A dictator is infallible—always right Mussolini and Hitler never admitted to be wrong. They ruthlessly liquidated those who accused them of being wrong. Purges and ‘nights of the long knives’ are necessary concomitants of dictatorships.

Gandhi has liquidated nobody, not even those who had physically assaulted him. Forty years ago in South Africa when a white mob attacked him, he contented himself with the observation that they were evidently misinformed about his activities. Subsequently when a burly Pathan beat him almost to death, he refused to prosecute the assailant. He never stifles criticism. In the last All-India Congress Committee meeting he publicly expressed his admiration for the handful of Communists who opposed the *Quit India* resolution. His appeal is not merely to the emotions but also to the intellect. He does not want blind adherents, nor is he himself in the least

<sup>1</sup> *A Week With Gandhi*, p. 119.

dependent on mass following. When he is convinced that he is right, he will go ahead even if the whole world is against him. On the other hand no amount of opposition will deflect him from the path he chooses, after thorough reflection.

Still, the reader is likely to say, Gandhi is a dictator. Otherwise, how can one account for the virtual veneration in which he is held, for the tremendous crowds which surround him wherever he goes, for the complete grip he has on the Congress machine? Even iconoclasts like Nehru are like putty in his hands. How can you account for all this?

It is indeed a baffling phenomenon to the Western mind, and even to westernized Indians. In the west, too, they worship their heroes, and perhaps they do it far more hysterically than we do in India. But their heroes are always Cæsars, not Christs. Cæsars, Napoleons, Mussolinis and Hitlers (and sometimes even Churchills, to be idolized to-day and stabbed or shot in the back, or simply cast on the scrap-heap, to-morrow. But Gandhi like the Ganges goes on in flood or trickle, in jail or free, worshipped, ignored or abused. To India's unlettered millions he is not a political leader at all, but a man of God, in the line of the great saints and ascetics. Churchill's term of abuse "The Naked Fakir" is really an apt description of the Mahatma as he appears to the simple villagers, who always venerate Fakirs—the more so when they are in the altogether!

This is the secret of Gandhi's immense hold on the

mass-mind—of his “dictatorship” if you like. India understands him instinctively—his life and his philosophy, his loin-cloth and his non-violence, his public prayers and days of silence and periodical fasts. It was an accident that Lenin was born in Russia and Sun Yat-Sen in China but Gandhi, one feels, could have been born in no other country. In the words of Nehru : “Whether Gandhiji is a democrat or not, he does represent the peasant masses of India ; he is the quintessence of the conscious and sub-conscious will of those millions. It is perhaps something more than representation ; for he is the idealised personification of those vast millions.”<sup>1</sup>

This may be true of the masses, but what of the classes ? It is after all the latter who are politically most active. They are educated, sophisticated, more or less rational. They should know their onions. Why should they follow the Mahatma ? Why should they also be under the Gandhi spell ? Let Nehru again give the answer. “Gandhi attracted people, but it was ultimately intellectual conviction that brought them to him and kept them there. They did not agree with his philosophy of life, or even with many of his ideals. Often they did not understand him. But the action that he proposed was something tangible, which could be understood and appreciated intellectually. Any action would have been welcome after the long tradition of inaction which our spineless politics had nurtured ; grave and effective action with

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 253.

an ethical halo about it had an irresistible appeal, both to the intellect and the emotions.”<sup>1</sup>

In other words it is the Gandhian dynamics which explains his immense hold over the classes and masses alike. His philosophy has nothing weak or apologetic or unworldly or masochistic about it. It might not have always brought about tangible results, but it has unfailingly evoked the finest response from the country—suffering, sacrifice and heroism from men and even children. When Gandhi gives the call for action—and nobody else in a century of struggle for Indian freedom has given such a call—the controversies are stilled and the people fall in line behind him unquestioningly. “We cannot let down the old man,” is a phrase one often hears in Congress circles. One might have said this about one’s grandfather! No, one can’t let down grandad.

But sometimes even his most devoted followers do not fall into line. They fall out. Sometimes they even fall foul of Gandhi. Srinivas Iyengar did. The Ali brothers did. Subhas Bose did. C. Rajagopalachari did—to take the latest and perhaps the most blatant instance. What happens then? Nothing. There is no liquidation, no ex-communication, not even a public chastisement. The seceders simply go their way and Gandhi his. And in most cases their mutual relations remain as cordial as ever. A Rajagopalachari may even subsequently succeed in converting Gandhi to his views to the consternation of the faithful! This is hardly the hallmark of a dictator!

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 254.

Even what Nichols calls " the 100 per cent. Fascist organization which Gandhi has created " is not merely a rubber-stamp or dictaphone of the Mahatma. In the first place, constitutionally, Gandhi has no place in the Congress Executive at all, as he is not even a four-anna primary member of the Congress, having retired in 1934. That is why he bluntly refused to accept Lord Wavell's recent invitation to meet him as the representative of the Congress. He could call upon the Viceroy only in his personal capacity. He could not arrogate the powers of the Congress Working Committee and insisted upon Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress President, being invited to the Simla Conference if Wavell cared at all for Congress co-operation.

Secondly, whenever in the past he launched and led his Civil disobedience movements, it was done in the name of and by the express authorization of the All-India Congress Committee, the relative resolution being passed in open session with complete freedom for the dissentients to oppose it.

Thirdly, though it is a fact that he has since his official retirement from the Congress acted as the non-official adviser of the Congress Working Committee and of the Congress, the latter are free to accept or reject his advice. There is nothing sacrosanct or dictatorial about it. During the last few years there have been at least four major occasions on which the Congress has acted against Gandhi's express advice.

The first arose early in 1939 when Subhas Bose

flouted the directive of Gandhi (which was backed by his own Working Committee), and got himself elected the President of the Congress for the second time in succession. This was a terrific blow to the "Old guard," though Bose's victory proved pyrrhic in the end. The second occasion came after the declaration of war when the Congress Working Committee overruled Gandhi's original proposal to give unconditional support to the British, and called upon the Government to specify its war aims, as a condition precedent of its co-operation. The third time it was the All-India Congress Committee which by the Poona Resolution (July 1940) jettisoned the main plank of Gandhian philosophy—non-violence—itself and plumped for the armed defence of the country. This was indeed a fundamental break with Gandhi, who was absolved "from responsibility for the programme and activity which the Congress has to pursue."

The revolt against Gandhi's pacifism was carried one step further when the Armageddon approached India and the Congress resolved to prepare for all-out resistance to the Japs. Gandhi formally resigned his leadership of the Individual Civil Disobedience campaign and refused to be a party to any kind of war-effort. The point of all this is that every time there was a vital difference of opinion between Gandhi and the Congress Executive, it was the so-called dictator who had to withdraw, and who did withdraw gracefully. The opposition to Gandhi came from his most devoted followers—men like Nehru, Rajagopalachari and even Patel—who did not hesitate



to 'drop the pilot' for the safety and security of the country !

The pilot on his part was not slow to drop his own most cherished principle—non-violence—when once he realized the unanimous sentiment of the people regarding the defence of the country by all possible means at their disposal. The historic *Quit India* resolution, which appointed Gandhi the leader of the contemplated movement, also pledged to defend India and resist aggression with *the armed* as well as the non-violent forces at the command of the country. For Gandhi to accept the leadership on those terms was an onerous sacrifice indeed, a break with all his past !

Such is 'Dictator' Gandhi and such is the 'Fascist dictatorship' which he has imposed upon India—of which a lurid picture has been painted by Nichols ! A 'Dictator' without either the status or trappings of office, whose only weapons are non-violence and love, and who believes in turning the right cheek to him who has struck the left.

A 'Dictatorship' without Gestapo and the concentration camp—or rather a 'dictatorship' which was born in and has grown up in the concentration camps, which renounced the control of the Government of seven provinces (total area half a million square miles—equal to the areas of Germany, France and Great Britain combined together ! Population 180 million) for the sake of a moral protest, whose only strength is the willing allegiance of millions and

millions of people, and which struggles alone for freedom but not for its own freedom alone.

“ The All-India Congress Committee wishes to make it quite clear to all concerned,” ran the last clause of the *Quit India* resolution,—“ that by embarking on a mass struggle, it has no intention of gaining power for the Congress. The power, when it comes, will belong to the whole people of India.”

Imagine the Fuehrer telling this to the Jews and Social Democrats and Catholics and Communists in the Third Reich. Imagine Il Duce del Fascismo telling the Liberals and Socialists and Syndicalists on the eve of his ‘ March on Rome ’ : *The power, when it comes, will belong to the whole people of Italy . . .*

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## CHAPTER X

### THE KNAVE HATH SAID

IN the last chapter we have seen something of the "Fascist" principles and practices of the Congress and had a glimpse into the Gandhi "dictatorship." Let us now look into the charge that "the Congress is Fascist by open confession."

Nichols seeks to establish this accusation by quoting extensively from *The Iron Dictator* and commenting upon it. This rag has been already dealt with earlier, and the reader will therefore be well-advised to put the three pages, which Nichols has devoted to this discussion, to a more practical purpose than enlightenment on India. It would not be a bad idea however to take a few samples of the open confessions of the Congress leaders and to compare them with those of Nichols on the same subjects. Let us begin with Japan, for it was Japan which began the era of totalitarian aggression with its occupation of Manchuria.

India had always considerable admiration for Japan for her amazing resurgence from medievalism to modern times within a few decades. It is rightly said that Japan's victory over Czarist Russia in 1905 served as a beacon-light of hope to the entire East. Indian leaders often placed Japan as a model before the young generation, and Subhas Bose was not the first revolutionary who hoped to win freedom with the help of Tokyo. But in spite of all this, the Indian

people as a whole unreservedly condemned Japan's career of aggression from the very beginning and expressed their fraternal sympathy for China. The correspondence between India's great poet Rabindranath Tagore and Japan's famous author Yone Noguchi on this subject, in which the former has condemned in ringing terms Japan's militarism, will go down in history as a classic document.

The Indian National Congress has passed more than one resolution on the subject ever since Nippon's evil shadow fell upon Manchuria. The climax came with the invasion of China proper. On February 6, 1938, the Congress Working Committee passed the following prophetic resolution: "This imperialist invasion is fraught with the gravest consequences for the future of world peace and freedom in Asia . . . As a mark of India's sympathy with the Chinese People, the Congress calls upon the people of India to refrain from purchasing Japanese goods." The same year Congress sent a Medical Mission to China. What were the great democracies sending to China then? Britain was sending profuse compliments and thanks to Tokyo for taking up the policeman's job in the East, while the United States was sending something more useful—scrap-iron and oil—to enable her to prepare for Pearl Harbour.

How did clever little Nichols, who has so vehemently sought to prove the Congress to be a 100 per cent. Fascist organization, react to Japan's smash and grab? He was in the full bloom of his pacifism then and in his Christian magnanimity suggested, probably

as a reward for the good work she was doing in Manchuria, that Japan should be allowed to colonize Australia !

Let me assure the indignant kangaroo who is about to make a mighty jump at me for this sacrilege upon Australia, that *The Fool Hath Said* it, really. Listen to this : " The results of a war between England and Japan are too horrible to contemplate. On the other hand, the voluntary presentation to Japan of certain areas in Northern Australia is not horrible to contemplate at all. There is enough room in Australia for the entire population of Japan and the entire population of England, and then some."<sup>1</sup>

Long before Chamberlain presented Czechoslovakia to Hitler on the Munich platter in order to prevent a war between Britain and Germany, Nichols cheerfully proposed a similar courtesy offering of Australia—" a desert, kept empty by armed force, a desert in whose emptiness are the germs of war,"<sup>2</sup>—to Japan. I am told that *Verdict On India* is proving a bestseller in Australia, too. So naturally it is with the greatest pleasure that one presents this tail-piece to the Aussies. Know your Nichols, digger, before you swallow his *Verdict* !

## II

The next milestone on the Fascist highway was Abyssinia. In April 1936 the Lucknow Congress passed the following resolution : " The Congress

<sup>1</sup> *The Fool Hath Said*, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

expresses the sympathy of the Indian nation for the Ethiopian people who are so heroically defending their country against imperialist aggression and considers Abyssinia's fight as part of the fight of all exploited nations for freedom. The Congress condemns the great Powers and the League of Nations for their policy in regard to the Italo-Abyssinian war." An "Abyssinia Day" was observed all over India on May 9, 1936.

Writing twenty months later, Nichols also condemned the great Powers and the League for their policy in the Italo-Abyssinian war. That is to say, he condemned them for espousing the Abyssinian cause at all—even in the tongue-in-cheek manner they did it. He was grieved to find that as late as 1938 Abyssinia was recognized by Britain! "They (the world) did not realize that Abyssinia was, in itself, a courtesy expression, and that the Abyssinians were a collection of primitive tribes, cruel, superstitious, riddled with disease. Those few realists who pointed out that Italy was only doing, on a somewhat larger and more efficient scale, what we ourselves had done, time and again, in the past, and that a thorough conquest by a Western Power would perhaps in the long run make life safer, healthier and more agreeable for the Abyssinians themselves, were regarded as brutal Fascists."<sup>1</sup>

Leopold Amery, who has also frequently accused the Congress of being fascist, expressed identical sentiments regarding Japan's occupation of Manchu-

<sup>1</sup> *News of England*, p. 20.

ria. Imperialism and Fascism are after all, like the Colonel's Lady and Judy O'Grady, 'sisters under the skin' and that is why, for more than a decade British Imperialism sheltered its erring younger sisters, the Jap, Italian and German Fascisms, under its ample skirt.

Then comes Spain, which was not a milestone but a full-dress rehearsal of war. The Congress frequently expressed its solidarity with Spain and condemned the policy of sham non-intervention followed by the British government there. Jawaharlal Nehru paid a personal visit to Madrid and arranged for a food-ship to be sent to succour the starving Spanish people. "In Spain to-day," he said in his Presidential address at the Faizpur Congress (1936), "our battles are being fought and we watch this struggle not merely with the sympathy of friendly outsiders, but with the painful anxiety of those who are themselves involved in it."

How was Nichols watching this struggle? The Fascist puppy was standing on its hind legs and dexterously catching the tit-bits that were being thrown from Franco's table, while vigorously wagging its stump of a tail in approbation of the orgy of massacre and rape indulged in by the legionaries of Hitler and Mussolini, and Franco's own Moors. The spotted puppy also avidly lapped up all the atrocity stories about Republican Spain, stories of legalized prostitution, of the hacking of limbs of priests and others, 'beside which the crimes of Nero appear humane.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *News of England*, p. 106, seqq.

China, Abyssinia and Spain may be strange names to an insular British author—just as Czechoslovakia was upon a notorious occasion to a British Prime Minister. Their past pronouncements upon these remote countries should not be therefore cast in their face. Well, let us see what Nichols has to say about the Jews, his fellow-citizens and next-door neighbours. In the first place, he tries to tone down all the terrible atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis upon the German Jews—their next-door neighbours. Those atrocities revolted every decent man in the world long before Hitler began his career of conquest. “The German persecution of the Jews,” wrote Gandhi, “seems to have no parallel in history. The tyrants of old never went so mad as Hitler seems to have gone . . . If there ever could be a justifiable war in the name of and for humanity, a war against Germany, to prevent the wanton persecution of a whole race, would be completely justified.”<sup>1</sup> These words, coming from one who is anti-war to the very core of his being, show the depth of Indian feeling against anti-Semitism.

Nichols, too, professes a deep antipathy to anti-Semitism. But he is quick to tell us that it is as old as the Pharaohs. “You cannot explain away a phenomenon so ancient and so wide-spread. The dirty smoke of anti-Semitism has blown round the world since the dawn of time. You cannot deny that there must be some fire.”<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Nichols

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, November 26, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> *News of England*, p. 301.



takes a utilitarian view and sums up his views in a strikingly revealing metaphor : " The ivy is a parasite. The Jew is a parasite. But the ivy, on an ancient structure, is not only a parasite but a support. And the Jew, in an ancient structure like the British Empire, is not only an alien but an asset."<sup>1</sup>

Nichols had an implicit confidence in his hero Mosley, that he alone would be able to solve the Jewish problem which has baffled mankind since the dawn of history. How tub-thumping Oswald would have tackled it, we do not fortunately know. But his hero Hitler has given us a practical demonstration of his solution—Pogroms, Concentration Camps, Gas Chambers and Incinerators ! A handful of ashes is the final Fascist solution of the Jewish problem !

### III

So much for ' the open professions ' of the Congress as also of Nichols. Now let us examine a few " signs and portents of (Congress) Fascism sticking out a mile." " The Khaddar dhoti and the Gandhi cap," says Nichols, " are the counterparts of the Nazi shirt and Swastika ; no orthodox Congressman cares to show himself in any other costume on official occasions."<sup>2</sup>

This is pure nonsense. Khaddar means hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. When Adam delved and Eve span, both of them evidently used Khaddar. The

<sup>1</sup> *News of England*, p. 299.

<sup>2</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 164.

dhوتي is the simplest garment known to man, being nothing more than a piece of white cloth two or three yards long and a yard broad, which can be put to a hundred different uses. Similarly if you fold your handkerchief and sew (or pin) it on both sides, you have a Gandhi cap ready for wear. The Congress therefore can claim no sartorial copyright either in the Khaddar dhوتي or the Gandhi cap, which are being used in India for thousands of years. It was a perverted mind which could call them the counterparts of the Nazi brown-shirt or the Swastika.

Neither the dhوتي nor the cap is a part of the Congress uniform. In fact the Congress does not sport any uniform at all, though hand-spun and hand-woven cloth is *de rigueur* for office holders only, whatever style of dress they may affect—Indian, European or Patagonian. There is no Gandhi cap on Gandhi's own head and his loin-cloth is an apology for a dhوتي. The Congress President has neither a Gandhi cap nor a dhوتي but the courtly North Indian costume. Nehru uses the dhوتي and the tight pyjama impartially, while Rajagopalachari like most people from Madras and Bengal is, as a rule, bareheaded.

Another Fascist portent which stuck out a mile into Nichols's ears was the word 'Gandhiji,' which he says is a striking equivalent of the German 'Heil Hitler.' 'The terminal *ji* is in theory an expression of endearment, in reality it has become a test of orthodoxy.'<sup>1</sup> This is a typical Nichols falsehood.

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 165.

When he met his Nazi friends before the war, they must have greeted him with a *Heil Hitler* ! But nobody in India surely cried *Gandhiji* ! on meeting him. People simply said *How-do-you-do, Mister Nichols*. Which conclusively shows that these two terms are not equivalent. Indian authors write ‘Gandhi,’ or ‘Gandhiji,’ or ‘Mahatma Gandhi’ as they like. The official history of the Congress written by Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya more often refers to him simply as ‘Gandhi’ than otherwise, which conclusively proves that there is no orthodoxy attached to the *ji*.

Nor is *ji* an expression of endearment. If instead of picking worthless pamphlets and gutter-stall rags for his enlightenment, Nichols had read Nehru’s *Autobiography*, he would have easily understood what the *ji* stands for. “I have seen some extraordinary explanations of this ‘*ji*’ in books and articles by English writers,” writes Nehru. (But surely none could have been more crooked than Nichols’s invention !) “Some have imagined that it is a term of endearment—Gandhiji meaning ‘dear little Gandhi’ ! This is perfectly absurd and shows colossal ignorance of Indian life. ‘Ji’ is one of the commonest additions to a name in India being applied indiscriminately to all kinds of people and to men, women, boys, girls and children. It conveys an idea of respect, something equivalent to Mr., Mrs., or Miss. Hindustani is rich in courtesy phrases and prefixes and suffixes to names and honorific titles. ‘Ji’ is the simplest of

these and the least formal of them, though perfectly correct.”<sup>1</sup>

Be more careful in hunting Nazi equivalents henceforth, *Nicholsji*—or should it be *Heil Hitler!* *Herr Nichols!*

## IV

One of the most atrocious accusations levelled by Nichols against Gandhi was that he was pro-Jap through and through. “He was convinced that Britain was finished and that Japan had won the war. He was anxious to stand well with the little yellow men, who, he thought, would shortly be his new masters. Needless to say, he did not confess this in so many words, for he always speaks with one eye on America, and if America had caught him in an overt flirtation with Japan, the consequences to his prestige would have been catastrophic. But he went as far as he could.”<sup>2</sup>

I am writing this at the moment when Gandhi and the Congress leaders are busy in Simla discussing with the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, the formation of a new Government in India—one of whose main jobs will be the intensification of the war effort against Japan. There is now no necessity, therefore, to attempt any elaborate refutation of Nichols’s charge. Wavell, who has been authorised by the British Government to invite Indian leaders to participate in

<sup>1</sup> Nehru : *Autobiography*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> *Verdict On India*, pp. 172-73.

his government, is not a sucker to seek the co-operation of Fifth Columnists and Collaborationists.

But the point is that even when Nichols was penning his infamous *Verdict*, there was plenty of evidence available to convince the impartial observer that Gandhi was about as pro-Jap as the late President Roosevelt, howsoever diametrically opposite their attitudes to the war might have been. In the first place, the very background of the Congress has been consistently anti-Fascist. Gandhi's own record of a life-time was itself a shining guarantee that he wouldn't sell himself either to the 'little yellow men' of Japan or their big white brothers of Germany—the Robust Males of Nichols.

Apart from this, there were the Congress resolutions, there were the speeches of Congress leaders, there were the weekly writings of Gandhi in the *Harijan* all set in black and white to reassure the honest inquirer.

Three years before the war had spread to the East Gandhi had bluntly informed Mr. Takaoka, a member of the Japanese Diet, that he did not subscribe to the doctrine of Asia for the Asiatics, if it was meant as an anti-European combination.<sup>1</sup> He had thus spurned long in advance the key appeal of Jap propaganda. A month later he told another Japanese interviewer, Dr. Kagawa : "How can we understand this swallowing alive of China, drugging her with poison and so many other horrid things ? How could you have committed all these atrocities ? And then

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, December 24, 1938.

your great poet calls it a war of humanity and a blessing to China ! ”<sup>1</sup> Nichols would have us believe that a man who could administer such stinging reproofs to Japan at a time when he himself was busy appeasing her with the voluntary present of Australia, suddenly threw himself into the arms of Tojo in 1942 !

Even after the war began, Gandhi's condemnation of Jap aggression, or his own determination to resist it, was not the less outspoken.

Here are just a few random quotations taken from the *Harijan*.

“ Non-violent resistance would commence the moment they (the Japanese) effected a landing. Thus non-violent resisters would refuse them any help, even water. For it is no part of their duty to help anyone to steal their country.” (April 12, 1942.)

“ The Japanese cannot have India without mowing down 350 million people.” (April 19, 1942.)

“ Remember, I am more interested than the British in keeping the Japanese out. For Britain's defeat in Indian waters may mean only the loss of India, but if Japan wins India loses everything.” (June 14, 1942.)

“ I want India to oppose Japan to a man.” (June 21, 1942.)

“ I would rather be shot than submit to Japanese or any other power.” (July 26, 1942.)

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, January 21, 1939.

## V

So much for Gandhi being a pro-Jap. Here are a few more quotations from the *Harijan* to contradict the other lie of Nichols that Gandhi was convinced that Britain was finished :

“ The recent British reverses ought not to create panic in the land. In all the wars that Britain has fought or in which she has been engaged, there have been reverses, some of which may be considered disastrous. But the British have a knack of surviving them and turning them into stepping-stones to success. Hence the saying peculiar to them that they blunder through to success . . . If we have learnt nothing worth from the contact with the British, let us at least learn their calmness in the face of misfortunes.” (February 22, 1942).

A correspondent asked him the following question directly bearing upon the issue : “ Is it a fact that your present attitude towards England and Japan is influenced by the belief that you think the British and the Allies are going to be defeated in this war ? ” Pat came the straightforward reply : “ I have no hesitation in saying that it is not true. On the contrary, I said only the other day that the Britisher was hard to beat. He has not known what it is to be defeated.” (June 7, 1942).

I shall give only one more quotation from Gandhi's speech on the *Quit India* resolution delivered barely a day before his arrest and long incarceration : “ Never believe that the British are going to lose the

war. I know they are not a nation of cowards. They will fight to the last rather than accept defeat." (August 7, 1942.)

Nichols had all these clear-cut statements to read and ponder over had he not been actuated by *malice prepense*. Even if he did not want to trust the word of Gandhi himself, there was the testimony of the Empire's senior-most statesman, Field Marshal Smuts, given at a press conference in London on November 13, 1942: "It is sheer nonsense to talk of Mahatma Gandhi as a Fifth Columnist. He is a great man. He is one of the great men of the world and he is the last person to be placed in that category."

And if Smuts himself was suspect in the eyes of Nichols, there was the categorical declaration of the Secretary of State for India in the House of Commons on May 27, 1943, that the Government of India made no charges of pro-Japanese sympathy against Mr. Gandhi and other detained Congress leaders. This was further officially reiterated in the Indian Council of State on August 3, 1943, just when Nichols was busy with his 'intensive study of India'—and also with the intensive twisting of Gandhi's writings in order to cook up evidence to damn Congress in the eyes of the world.

Here is an illustration of *suppressio veri* from page 166 of the *Verdict*: "God has chosen me as his instrument—Gandhi has said this on a number of occasions. So has Hitler. So has Mussolini." In a footnote Nichols asks the reader to "see *Gandhi is India*, an Anthology." If you actually see the book,



you will find just a single occasion when Gandhi said this, but *this is not all that Gandhi said*. Nichols has played a despicable trick both on Gandhi and the author of *Gandhi is India*, for the complete quotation on page 10 of that book runs as follows : " God has chosen me as his instrument for presenting non-violence to India, for dealing with her many ills." Nichols may as well remove the *not* in the Ten Commandments and call them the libertine's charter !

As for *suggestio falsi*, it will be difficult to find a more sustained effort in the line than the entire chapter *Heil Hindu*. He suggests, for example, that Gandhi had begun to drop the mask of non-violence just before he went to jail. And as a proof he quotes the Congress bulletins which were flooding India like an avalanche. Nichols naturally hides the fact that these bulletins made their appearance *only after the Congress leaders were arrested and imprisoned en masse*, that they were unauthorised and, above all, that under the spacious name of the Congress, all sorts of bulletins were being circulated by freelancers, revolutionaries, terrorists, Fifth Columnists, Forward Bloc (Subhas Bose's party) members and even by *agents provocateurs*, apart from a few genuine Congressmen who had gone underground. Gandhi was no more responsible for the avalanche than Nichols himself. By the way, how was Nichols able to quote from the ' Congress Bulletins ' so extensively and even to give their dates in his footnotes ? To possess them was a criminal offence and many persons have been sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for a year or

even more for having a stray bulletin on their person or in their houses. Who were the friends who supplied Nichols with such highly seditious documents ?

Or are all his quotations taken from the black-book *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances, 1942-43*, published by the Government of India ? If so, why did not Nichols refer to this book as his authority instead of making a show of hunting original references for his thesis ? Was it because in one place he had the effrontery to garble even the Government publication in order further to blacken Gandhi ?

“ In his newspaper *Harijan*, at the time of his arrest,” writes Nichols, “ the following masterpiece of evasion had appeared ‘ as an answer to an earnest question.’

*Q.—What may be permitted for disorganizing Government within the limit of non-violence ?*

*A.—I can give my personal opinion only. It will be non-violence without blemish.*

“ So far so good. And the next sentence ?

*Cutting wires, removing rails, destroying small bridges cannot be objected to in a struggle like this.*

“ *Small bridges.* An exquisite phrase, Mr. Gandhi ! When is a bridge ‘ small ’ and when is it ‘ not small ’ ? ”<sup>1</sup>

Compare this with the following original extract, as quoted on page 81 of the *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances, 1942-43* (Government of India Press, New Delhi) :

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, pp. 174-5.

Q.—(*As on page 147.*)

A.—I can give my personal opinion only. In my opinion looting or burning of offices, banks, granaries, etc., is not permissible. Dislocation of traffic communications is permissible in a non-violent manner without endangering life. The organization of strikes is the best, and if that can be accomplished, it in itself will be effective and sufficient. It will be non-violence without blemish. Cutting wires, removing rails, destroying small bridges cannot be objected to in a struggle like this, *provided ample precautions are taken to safeguard life.*”

Not content with the criminal liberty he has taken in reproducing this, Nichols insinuates that Gandhi is the author of this quotation: *An exquisite phrase, Mr. Gandhi!* The heading, however, makes it clear that it is an “*Extract from the Harijan, dated August 23, 1942.*”

August 23, 1942! Fourteen days after Gandhi was locked up in the Aga Khan's palace near Poona and cut off from all contact with the outside world. The *Harijan* was banned then though it was brought out for a few weeks by K. G. Mashruwalla, whose personal opinion given in the extract has been maladroitly foisted upon Gandhi by Nichols, thus constructively indicting him as an arch-saboteur!

An exquisite fabrication, *Heil Hitler! Nichols!* An exquisite effort indeed at garbling, truncating, twisting and distorting a quotation in the most shameless manner. You should have called your book *THE KAVE HATH SAID!*

## CHAPTER XI

### POET LAUREATE OF PAKISTAN

WE have spent quite a long time over the villains of Nichols. It is now time to meet his hero, who is none less than Mr. M. A. Jinnah, the distinguished President of the Muslim League. His followers are content to call him *Qaid-e-Azam*—the Great Leader—but to Nichols he is a giant, the most important man in Asia (sic) and the “Potential Emperor of Pakistan !”

This title is likely to shock many a devout Muslim who views Pakistan as a resuscitation of the *Hukumat-i-Ilahiya*—the Kingdom of God—and not as a potential empire of Mahomed Ali Jinnah, who had never much time to waste over Islamic theology. To quote Dr. B. R. Ambedkar—and we can do so confidently because both Nichols and Jinnah tip his *Pakistan* as an authoritative book on the subject,<sup>1</sup>—“Mr. Jinnah was never known to be a very devout, pious or a professing Muslim. Besides kissing the Holy Koran as and when he was sworn in as an M.L.A., he does not appear to have bothered much about its contents or its special tenets. It is doubtful if he frequented any mosque either out of curiosity or religious fervour. To-day one finds a complete change in Mr. Jinnah.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 179, footnote. Among the two books recommended by Jinnah to Gandhi during their negotiations in September 1944 for understanding the case for Pakistan, the first was Dr. Ambedkar's.

<sup>2</sup> B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan*, p. 405.

Barring the foregoing solitary lapse, Nichols has taken supreme care to remain on the right side of Mussalmans. He has not a word of criticism to say against anything Muslim. Probably after having heaped all the words of abuse and opprobrium in his dictionary on everything Hindu, he had none left to spare for anybody else. He has turned his searchlight on Hinduism but Islam remains unilluminated by the Nicholsian floodlight. *Ayurveda*—the Hindu system of medicine—is ridiculed, but *Unani*—the Muslim ditto—is not even mentioned! In fact Nichols has, throughout his book, played the trick of putting the word *Hindu* before whatever he wanted to damn!

Does he want to condemn the Indian cinema? He has only to rub his Aladdin's searchlight, and hey and presto! it becomes the *Hindu* Hollywood, though there are as many Muslim and Parsi as Hindu producers, artistes, technicians and directors in the industry. Does he want to hit the Indian journalists who harried him a lot during his mission in India? Another rub, and they become the *Hindu* press, though the first Chairman of the Indian and Eastern Newspaper (Proprietor's) Society was an Englishman and the President of the All-India Editor's Conference for the last two years is a Muslim.

## II

This is by the way. The point is that Nichols, even more than Miss Mayo before him, has scrupulously avoided giving the least offence to the Muslims, for

which all Indians should be sincerely happy. For Nichols himself it must have required great restraint not to sneer even once at the typical Muslim institutions like purdah and polygamy, especially when he had already dilated at length in his cattiest style upon "the brutal serfdom of the modern Moslem woman" and the super-Reno ease of the Muslim divorce in a previous book of his. "Any man who cares for women, for human beings, must be upset when he contemplates the odious state of affairs which is the lot of the Moslem women."<sup>1</sup>

It should be obvious to the meanest intelligence that if Nichols has aimed only mud and brickbats at the Hindus and reserved all the bouquets and garlands for the Muslims, it was not for love of Muslims or respect for Islam. It is entirely in keeping with the political background of *Verdict On India*. Those who briefed Nichols must have warned him not to tread on the Muslim corns. And in spite of his protestations of the book being 'all his own work,' there is not the least doubt that he was briefed and primed for the job. During a debate in the Central Legislative Assembly, it was revealed that Nichols was accompanied for some time by Dr. Spear of the Counter-Propaganda Directorate of the Government of India, and later on, the official whip of the Assembly. During his prolonged stay in Madras, he was chaperoned by one Captain Harvey of the National War Front.

Nichols naturally does not mention either Dr. Spear or Captain Harvey. But he does refer to certain

<sup>1</sup> See *No Place Like Home*, pp. 217-24.

nameless if not mythical Muslims ‘ who lost no opportunity to impress on me the decadence of Hindu philosophy ’ and the numerous horrid practices of Hindu customs and religion. “ *Hinduism is filth !*— That is what a famous Muslim had said to me in Delhi. ‘ Hinduism is filth ! ’ He had quoted numerous instances to prove the point that it was ‘ a social disease. ’ ”<sup>2</sup> He would have us believe that while he was lying with an infected foot in a Peshawar hospital “ Muslim after Muslim bent over my bed, breathing fire and slaughter against the hated Hindu. ”<sup>3</sup>

This is more an insult to Muslims than Hindus, for it would mean as if the Muslims have no other occupation than to breathe anti-Hindu fire and slaughter on the neck of the nearest Englishman. The caricature is so crude as to make one wonder whether the infection was in the patient’s foot or his head. It seems to have been rather a bad case of Hinduphobia and it was probably in a delirium tremens that he visualized Muslim after Muslim leaping over his bed and breathing fire and slaughter.

Nichols would have saved himself all this suffering at the hands of his (alleged) Muslim visitors had he asked his nurse to copy out in bold letters a certain sentence from his *No Place Like Home* and hang it above his bed along with his temperature chart. That would have served as the surest talisman to drive away the eerie procession of fanatical Muslims with

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

lucifer-like breaths—or the nightmare which Nichols was suffering from ! Incidentally, it may tone down the exultation with which *Verdict On India* has been received in certain quarters of Pakistan.

This is the talisman : “ The ethics of Mohammedanism are crude and obvious in comparison with the ethics of Christianity.”<sup>1</sup> Remember enjoying *Turkish Delight*, Nichols ?

### III

It was observed a few minutes ago that the anti-Hindu and pro-Muslim character of *Verdict On India* was perfectly understandable against the political background. It is necessary to elaborate this statement. The military excuse given by the British for not quitting India in 1942 was, externally, the Japs. They argued that their withdrawal from India would imperil the entire democratic cause. The political excuse was the Muslims and other minorities, whom they couldn't leave to the tender mercies of the allegedly “ Hindu ” Congress.

In the forties more than ever before in the history of British Imperialism, the Muslims became its favourite wife—to recall a vulgar simile of a former British Governor of Bengal. The Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and other communal organizations served as a strategic counterpoise to the Congress. Though soon after the declaration of the war, the Congress governments resigned and exposed the

<sup>1</sup> Nichols, *No Place Like Home*, p. 96.



British pretensions of fighting for freedom and democracy, provincial autonomy in the other provinces continued as before, thus saving the British face. While Congressmen curtly refused to help the war effort and later on, even to extend moral sympathy to the British, the Muslim ministries mobilized all the resources of their respective provinces for the effective prosecution of the war, in spite of the fact—slurred over by Nichols—that, officially, the League was as much anti-war-effort as the Congress. The Qaid-e-Azam even compelled the late Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, the Punjab Premier, to resign from the Viceroy's National Defence Council.

Especially during the latter half of 1942, when the days of British Imperialism seemed to be almost numbered, the Muslim League and its shrewd leader did their best to buttress its tottering hold. In his blind hatred of the Congress, Jinnah declared the *Quit India* demand to be aimed as much against the Muslims as the British, though the Congress President and Gandhi had made the sporting offer that the British Government should hand over power to the Muslim League.<sup>1</sup> Jinnah did not merely stand out of the conflict. He was a non-belligerent, but not a neutral. His moral or, to be more accurate, his power-politics sympathies were all with the British Government. He called upon his followers and the community to abstain from the movement and delivered a violent diatribe against the Congress.

The British Government was profoundly grateful

<sup>1</sup> Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India*, II, 299.

for this timely support to the Raj. Jinnah deserved all the ministries he asked for : Assam, Bengal, Sind, North-West Frontier were his in a row. The League was free to propagate Pakistan and to conduct its political activities unhampered by the severe restrictions imposed by law. The Muslims as a community were given the maximum patronage and solemn assurances that their interests would always be safeguarded by the Paramount Power. These assurances have been always there, of course, but henceforth Jinnah, the Potential Emperor of Pakistan, virtually constituted himself King Veto of Hindustan.

Edgar Snow, one of the most penetrating observers of modern times, has made a similar analysis of the Indian situation : " The wind which blew Gandhi ill had been steadily blowing good to his chief political opponent Mohammed Ali Jinnah. The Qaid-e-Azam, the Grand Mogul of the Muslim League, had apparently put his bets on the right horse. By taking up a nominal pro-Ally stand and staying out of rebellions, the Mussalman leader had kept his freedom to talk. And he had made exceedingly good use of it by blanketing India with propaganda for his pet scheme of Pakistan.

" ' Jinnah is sitting on the finest velvet of the land,' one of the Viceroy's officials said to me. ' The field is his. The longer Gandhi is kept under a lid, the better Jinnah prospers. But the thing is beginning to worry us. Pakistan is gaining headway, like a rolling snowball. It may soon be too late to stop it.'

" How seriously was that danger actually exercising

the servants of Messrs. Churchill and Amery? *The bigger the snowball the less chance there was that India would ever break off in one hunk from the Empire.*"<sup>1</sup>

These remarks relate to April-May 1943—the very period when Nichols was busy making his intensive study of India. How nicely did his mission fit in the Imperial set-up! The best way to checkmate the Congress was to placate the Muslim League. The bigger the snowball of Pakistan, the remoter the prospect of being compelled to quit Hindustan. And, finally, the heaviest counterweight to the leader of the Congress was the potential Emperor of Pakistan.

Imperialism was deeply grateful to the Muslim League, to the unborn empire of Pakistan and to its uncrowned Emperor, Mahomed Ali Jinnah. It not only showered upon him all the laurels it could lay hands upon, but also presented him with a poet laureate. That poet laureate was none less than Beverley Nichols. Let us therefore examine his literary performance a little critically.

#### IV

Accuracy is not the strong suit either of a propagandist or poet laureate. Nichols, in spite of all his enthusiasm for Pakistan, is somewhat wobbly about even its exact population figures, not to talk of other statistics. On one page he puts down the Muslims as 85 million and on the very next he makes a trapeze jump to a round 100 million. Since numbers

<sup>1</sup> Edgar Snow, *Glory And Bondage*, p. 216, Italics mine.

count a lot in the argument for the partition of India, it is essential to know how many Muslims will eventually live in the elysian Pakistan—if the dream Empire is born.

The total population of India is 383 million, out of which 92 million or 24 per cent. are Muslims. If we exclude the Indian States, as we must when discussing the constitutional problem in India, the population of British India drops down to 295 million, the Muslims being 79 million or a little less than 27 per cent. When, therefore, Nichols writes that “Jinnah’s 100 million Muslims will march to the left, to the right, to the front, to the rear at his bidding, and at nobody else’s,”<sup>1</sup> he is not merely reducing the unborn empire of Pakistan to a ridiculous pantomime show, to be produced by the Qaid-e-Azam *a la* Ziegfield, but he is adding to the cast about 21 million unborn Muslim babies !

Even the 79 million Muslims will, however, not have the pleasure and privilege of being citizens of Pakistan. Nearly 20 million of them will have to be left behind under the hated Hindu heel, even if all the five provinces claimed by Jinnah—the Punjab, Sind, N. W. Frontier, Bengal and Assam—are incorporated in Pakistan *as they are*, which is manifestly unfair particularly to the Sikhs, who have no other ‘homeland,’ to use a word much bandied about at present. What is to happen to these 20 million faithful ? If 79 million Muslims can be oppressed and tyrannised by the 190 million Hindus of the present

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 188.

British India, in spite of the presence of the friendly British rulers, what will happen to the mere 20 million who will be left to the tender mercies of the 152 million brutal Hindus, unrestrained by the presence of the British, who will presumably obey Jinnah's stern directive to 'divide and quit'?

What is to happen to them? Are they to be swamped under the floodtide of the infidels? Or migrated *en masse* to the Land of the Pure? One has merely to pose the question to dismiss it. Suppose that two special trains, each carrying a thousand Muslim passengers, begin the mighty exodus from the South to the North—an average distance of a thousand miles. At this rate it will take more than twenty-seven years to complete the evacuation. And *then* some more trains will be required to transport the generation born in the meanwhile! I dozed off while working out this little problem in arithmetic only to be pursued by Pakistan Special after Pakistan Special running over my bed emitting fire and slaughter . . . I beg your pardon. I must have mixed up Nichols's nightmare with mine.

Mass migration—the only logical and lasting solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem, if we are to accept the premises of Pakistan—reduces it to absurdity. Let us now consider the 'hostages' theory. According to this theory—which is seriously put forth by many a protagonist of Pakistan, the Muslim minority in Hindustan and the Hindu minority in Pakistan will serve as mutual hostages. Persecution of Muslims in the former can be counterbalanced by

persecution of the Hindus in the latter. Prof. Coupland rightly condemns this as "a crude idea, a negation of civilized government." Indeed, it is negation of civilization itself, a return to the law of the jungle.

Even this barbaric theory falls through, however, when we get to brasstacks. In Hindustan there will be 20 million Muslims to 152 million Hindus, which roughly means a minority of 1 to 8. In Pakistan, on the other hand, there will be 38 million Hindus plus four million Sikhs (who can be trusted to team together) to the 58 million Muslims. The minority ratio thus works out at even better than 2 to 3—which means that it is not a minority at all.

Nay, it means that Pakistan is not Pakistan at all, with its 42 per cent. of infidels ! By sheer strength of numbers the advanced Hindus and the warlike Sikhs can safeguard their interests against the Muslim rulers, while the Muslim in Hindustan will find that he has merely leapt from the frying pan into the fire. This is another *reductio ad absurdum* of Pakistan.

Even Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, though he has a soft corner for Pakistan, was compelled to conclude : "Pakistan is unnecessary to Muslims where they are in a majority because there, there is no fear of Hindu Raj. It is worse than useless to Muslims where they are in a minority, because Pakistan or no Pakistan, they will have to face a Hindu Raj. Can politics be more futile than the politics of the Muslim League ? The Muslim League started to help minority Muslims and has ended by espousing the cause of majority Muslims. What a perversion of the original aim of

the Muslim League ! What a fall from the sublime to the ridiculous ! Partition as a remedy against Hindu Raj is worse than useless.”<sup>1</sup>

## v

The very idea of Hindus and Muslims always itching to fly at each other's throats is false and mischievous. It is worse than that. It is monstrous and whosoever propagates it, whether it be an ambition-ridden leader or a poison-laden rat, is the worst enemy of both Hindus and Muslims, who have lived together for a thousand years and who died together in their tens of thousand in the recent Bengal famine.

There was a Muslim League Ministry in that province then but the Muslims were not saved from starvation on that account, nor did the people all over the country, who contributed from a precious little pie to a million rupees for relief, distinguish between Hindu and Muslim. In the face of death all controversy between Hindu and Muslim, between Hindustan and Pakistan, was stilled. The bones of a million and half victims of the famine that litter the plains of Bengal are not the bones of Hindus or Muslims. They are the bones of Indians—bones of brothers.

With evident signs of licking his chops, Nichols quotes statistics of Hindu-Muslim riots from 1920 to 1940 from Ambedkar's book. “ This, then,” he crows, “ is the background of Pakistan, a background of

<sup>1</sup> *Pakistan*, p. 358.

blood." Apart from the fact that all the combined casualties of these twenty years' rioting would not add up to the massacre of St. Bartholomew or of Lidice, to take the latest example, indulged in by the highly civilized Christian people of the West, why does Nichols stop at 1940 ? Why does he not give figures of riots between 1940 and 1944 ?

It was in 1940 that the Pakistan resolution was passed by the Muslim League and Communal relations have been consistently deteriorating since then. This cannot be denied by any impartial observer. But neither can he deny that *since 1940 there has not been a single serious riot worth mentioning !* By any logic, the unbridled propaganda for Pakistan and the frequent exchange of compliments between League and Mahasabha spokesmen—both Jinnah and Savarkar have threatened direct action more than once !—should have further exacerbated communal feelings and brought on a sanguinary civil war. But nothing like that has happened. On the other hand all is happily quiet on the Hindu-Muslim front.

What is this to be attributed to ? Is it because, thanks to the war, the peasant is getting a fair return for his produce ? Because the spectre of unemployment no more haunts the country, and the worker is busy at the lathe or the loom ? Because the commercial community is enjoying a wave of prosperity ? Or simply because the British authorities are sternly determined not to tolerate a breach of the peace, which is bound to affect their war effort ? Whatever may be the reason, it effectively disposes of the



assumption that bloodshed and breaking each other's heads is the normal, inevitable occurrence wherever Hindu and Muslim stay together. They would never have stayed together in the same town, village or street for centuries had it been so.

It is not necessary to go to the other extreme in order to refute Nichols's gory picture of 'Hindu-Muslim hatred at murder heat' and to assert that there are no differences between the Hindus and the Muslims at all. For there are plenty of differences between Hindus and Muslims, as there are between Roman Catholics and Protestants, Jews and Gentiles, Buddhists and Taoists.

Religion, though it may unite man with his god, has always the trick of dividing him from his brother. But it would be ridiculous on that account to parcel out the world in different religious compartments, each claiming to be the exclusive land of the pure. History has always defeated such attempts from the Holy Roman to the Unholy Nazi Empire, where Nazism itself had become a religion with the Fuehrer as its Prophet. And man has found bonds stronger than religion to live together as a political society.

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## CHAPTER XII

### THE INGENUE AND THE GIANT

IN the last chapter we set out to call upon the Potential Emperor of Pakistan. But somehow we were held up on the frontiers of his kingdom by the huge signboard erected there by Nichols: *Hate Found An Empire!*<sup>1</sup> The author of *Verdict On India* has not merely contributed a poster to Pakistan; he has also treated us to a *Dialogue With a Giant*,<sup>2</sup> such dialogues being the characteristic highlights of Nichols's books.

This particular conversation piece, however, is hard to beat for sheer naiveté. Nothing like it can be found anywhere else in the political literature of the world. It reads less like an intelligent interview with a giant than as the candid confession of an *ingenue*. The *ingenue* was merely hanging upon the giant's words, swallowing them, echoing them, getting lost in them. Here is a specimen of the dialogue :

*Nichols* : Please, I would like to write these things down.

*Jinnah* : (after a thundering peroration on the differences between Hindus and Muslims) What have you written down ?

*Nichols* : I have only written ' The Muslims are a Nation.'

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> These are the headings of Chapters II and III, Part Three, of *Verdict On India* which deal with Pakistan.

*Jinnah* : And do you believe it ?

*Nichols* : I do.

This is how the dialogue proceeds, with the captivated *ingenue* merely prompting the hero to hold forth in his best declamatory style and with the finale coming in the only manner it could :

*Jinnah* : And the only *safe* course, you might add, is . . .

*Nichols* : }  
*Jinnah* : } Pakistan !

[*Curtain*]

It is a regular *opera bouffe* ! Nothing like it can be found (I repeat) in the political literature of the world—nor in that of love either, though Nichols seems to have fallen in love with Pakistan at first sight. Which is no wonder considering that hate founded the Empire and hate has also pronounced the Verdict !

One cannot take such a writing seriously and one would have dismissed it as *The Romantic Encounter Of Beverley Nichols With A Giant* ! We are told, however, that the dialogue has been edited by Mr. Jinnah himself, which means that we are expected to take it seriously as a testament of Pakistan. Subsequently, in a Press interview Mr. Jinnah went out of his way in giving a public testimonial to Nichols :

“On most of the subjects Mr. Beverley Nichols has spoken out boldly and fearlessly, and what he has stated is substantially true, but truth is always bitter. In fact, his is really an impartial verdict.”

“ But the party that is exposed in all its nakedness must naturally be furious, and all sorts of attempts have been made to discredit what is substantially a true verdict given by a bold and fearless journalist. Perhaps it has added to the greater annoyance and irritation of the Hindus because he has not hesitated to call a spade a spade.

“ I think that Mr. Nichols has made a great contribution in stating the truth and exposing the falsehood and hypocrisy as well as the false propaganda which has been carried on by the powerful and financial backing which the Hindu Congress commands.”

## II

It is a pity that the Qaid-e-Azam was persuaded to hand out such a chit, for it reduces the whole thing to a “ You-scratch-my-back-and-I-yours ” performance. Incidentally, Mr. Jinnah reveals that Nichols saw him three times and that it was only on the third occasion that “ he was honestly convinced that the only solution was the division of India.” So it was not a case of love at first sight at all—as one presumes from Nichols’s rapturous description of his meeting with the Giant! But then this is a hallucination which every lover suffers from, whether it is a Juliet enamoured of Romeo or a Beverley fallen for Pakistan!

If Gandhi got a Romain Rolland to explain his philosophy to the world, the Qaid-e-Azam deserved

a far better man than Nichols to 'sell' his dream empire, to use an expressive Americanism. Personally I have the greatest admiration for Mr. Jinnah as a political strategist, and I really feel it a pity that he should have thought it necessary to patronise a person with the antecedents of Nichols. For the *ingenue* had a succession of heroes in a number of countries before landing in the empire founded by hate. Jinnah was not the first idol Nichols had, nor will he be the last, if one knows one's Nichols.

In the United States it was Lindbergh whom he hailed as the American Prince of Wales, as one hedged with the divinity of a King, as one informed with the spirit of the crusades! It was the same Lindbergh who subsequently blossomed into an apologist of Nazism of the kind condemned as 'copperhead'<sup>1</sup> by the late President Roosevelt. In Germany it was the Robust Male, the Nordic Superman, the Blond Giant to whom the reader has already been introduced. And in Britain itself it was Oswald Mosley, the leader of the British Fascists, acclaimed by Nichols as "the only man I know who has in him the qualities of that hero for whom this country has waited so long, and waited in vain."

It will thus be seen that Nichols's heroes are of a type. The transition of Nichols from Mosley, who was in prison, to Jinnah, who was sitting on velvet in 1943, was not altogether surprising. For Mosley's dream empire was also founded on hate: hate of the Jews, hate of democracy and freedom, hate of human

<sup>1</sup> A species of American serpents.

decency. Nichols's dialogue piece with Mosley, in which he has boosted the British Union of Fascists, is as exhilarating as the one with Jinnah, in which he has boosted Pakistan.

When Nichols interviewed Mosley, he felt that he was "in the presence of a figure of tremendous importance;" he found Jinnah to be the most important man in Asia. Mosley's British Union "advanced as a religious movement;"<sup>1</sup> Pakistan has also advanced as a religious movement, on the handy cry of "Islam in danger." Mosley bitterly complained that he was blacked out by the British press; Jinnah is also equally bitter against the Hindu press. Mosley condemned the League of Nations, which he had once fervently supported, as "the restoration of the devil in the guise of God;" Jinnah condemns United India, of which he was so long such an outstanding champion, in equally lurid terms. Finally, if Nichols believed that thousands of Englishmen were prepared to die for Mosley, he also expects the 100 million Muslims (including the 21 millions unborn babies) to march to the left, right, front and even to the rear, at the bidding of Jinnah!

The similarity between the British and Indian heroes of Nichols is not merely fortuitous. For Jinnah has consciously modelled his strategy upon the Fascist methods. He is too intelligent and law-abiding a person to be a Fascist himself, but he is also shrewd enough to understand that the totalitarian technique pays bumper dividends—up to a point!

<sup>1</sup> *News of England*, p. 291.

He has utilized both *Gravaminpolitik* (politics of grievance) and *Machtpolitik* (politics of power) in a manner which would have done credit to a Hitler. The constitution of the Muslim League is no doubt democratic, as Jinnah ostentatiously stresses again and again. But he is the permanent President of the League and its virtual dictator. He is not *primus inter pares* in the League Working Committee, but the Qaid-e-Azam, the Great Leader, whose word is first and last. That title itself is suggestive of the *Fuehrerprinzip* (leadership principle) on which Fascism is based.

Nichols, who shrieked until his face became blue that the Congress was a Fascist organization and that Gandhi was its ruthless dictator, naturally avoids such words when writing about Jinnah and the League. Prof. Coupland is at least impartial. He indicts Jinnah as much as Gandhi of imposing a personal dictatorship.<sup>1</sup> We have seen, however, that Gandhi is often overridden by the Congress Working Committee, while the Muslim League Executive is no more than a rubber-stamp of the Qaid-e-Azam. Nichols gives away the whole show when he plaintively asks: "If Gandhi goes, there is always Nehru, or Rajagopalachari, or Patel or a dozen others. But if Jinnah goes, who is there?"<sup>2</sup> This is of course the haunting fear of all dictatorial regimes. A similar question was asked a million times in Nazi Germany:

<sup>1</sup> Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem In India*, II, 243 & III, 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 188.

*If Hitler goes, who is there?* History has given the answer.

That candid friend of Pakistan, Dr. Ambedkar, (whose book, please remember, is recommended as an authority both by Nichols and Jinnah,) does not mince words when writing about Jinnah's policy: "The Muslims are now speaking the language of Hitler and claiming a place in the sun, as Hitler has been doing for Germany."<sup>1</sup> "The third thing that is noticeable is the adoption by the Muslims of the gangster's method in politics. The riots are a sufficient indication that gangsterism has become a settled part of their strategy in politics. They seem to be consciously and deliberately imitating the Sudeten Germans in the means employed by them against the Czechs."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Ambedkar has therefore a few words of advice for the Congress, even though he has as much love lost for it as Jinnah himself: "The Congress has failed to realize that the policy of concession has increased Muslim aggressiveness, and what is more, Muslims interpret these concessions as a sign of defeatism on the part of the Hindus and the absence of the will to resist. The policy of appeasement will involve the Hindus in the same fearful situation in which the Allies found themselves as a result of the policy of appeasement which they adopted towards Hitler."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Pakistan*, p. 255.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 260.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.



## III

Jinnah knows the art of playing *Gravaminpolitik* as well as *Machtpolitik* to perfection. Let us first consider the former, if only because Nichols also has played upon the Muslim grievances and painted a lurid picture of the alleged oppression to which the Muslim masses were subjected by the Congress Governments during their brief regime. The contemporary agitation of Sudeten Germans engineered by the Nazi Fuehrer in *his* game of grievance-politics obviously inspired the Muslim League Fuehrer, as is evident from the following extract (one among many) from a speech he delivered in 1938 :

“ It was because the Sudeten Germans were forced under the heel of the majority of a Czechoslovakia who oppressed them, suppressed them, maltreated them and showed a brutal and callous disregard for their rights and interests for two decades, that the Republic of Czechoslovakia is now broken up and a new map will have to be drawn. Just as the Sudeten Germans were not defenceless and survived the oppression and persecution for two decades, so also the Mussalmans are not defenceless and cannot give up their national entity and aspirations.”<sup>1</sup>

If Jinnah's Leaguers have no better case than Konrad Henlein's Sudeten Germans, they must await a terrible disillusionment. The Qaid-e-Azam's totalitarian reading of history has proved to be as false as were the grievances of the Sudetens. Czechoslovakia

<sup>1</sup> *Indian Annual Register*, 1938, II, 354.

has risen again and Hitler and his stooge Henlein have gone the way of all aggressors. It is significant that while Jinnah gloated over the murder of the foremost democratic State in Europe, Jawaharlal Nehru, who happened to be in Europe then, wrote a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* to pledge all his sympathies to Czechoslovakia.<sup>1</sup>

Just as Hitler celebrated the secession of Sudeten with whoops of joy, so also Jinnah celebrated the resignation of the Congress Ministries by the observance of a Deliverance Day—though Hitler could really claim more credit for that deliverance than the League leader ! The various alleged grievances of the Muslims in the Congress provinces have been collected together in the Pirpur Report, which Nichols has swallowed lock, stock and Pirpur. It is worth recalling in this connection that it was the British pacifists (like Nichols !) who were most vocal in ventilating the grievances of the Sudeten Germans, and that it was the British government which helped Hitler to rape Czechoslovakia.

Like Runciman, the British mediator in Czechoslovakia, Nichols, the British propagandist in India, has lent his support to the grievances in spite of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, which he has mendaciously ignored. Dr. Ambedkar declares : “ A perusal of these instances, as given in the reports of the Muslim League Committees, leaves upon the reader the impression that although there may be some truth in the allegation, there is a great deal

<sup>1</sup> Nehru : *The Unity of India*, p. 284.

which is pure exaggeration.”<sup>1</sup> Prof. Coupland considers that the incidents “were not very numerous considering the vast areas concerned ; many of them were of a relatively trivial character : and similar incidents had been occurring from time to time for many years past.”<sup>2</sup>

Above all there is the high and impartial authority of Sir Harry Haig, who, as the Governor of the United Provinces, during the Congress regime, has first-hand knowledge of the situation. It should be noted in this connection that many of the ‘atrocities’ were alleged to be perpetrated in the United Provinces itself. Said Sir Harry in a speech before the East India Association : “ In dealing with questions raising communal issues the ministers, in my judgment, normally acted with impartiality and a desire to do what was fair. Indeed, towards the end of their term they were being seriously criticized by the Hindu Mahasabha on the ground that they were not being fair to the Hindus, though there was in fact no justification for such a criticism.”<sup>3</sup>

The Muslim League broadcast the ‘atrocities’ stories in the best Nazi style. Prof. Coupland has some scathing things to say about the Shareef Report (the Bihar version of the Pirpur Report) : “ Repulsive details are recounted, repeated and italicised with the deliberate object, it would almost seem, of infuriating any Moslem who might read them. Nor is it only Ministers or local Congress leaders who are charged

<sup>1</sup> *Pakistan*, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> *The Constitutional Problem in India, Part II*, p. 189.

<sup>3</sup> *Asiatic Review*, July 1940, p. 428.

with a policy of persecution. The administrative and judicial services are almost equally vilified.”<sup>1</sup>

The dictatorial genius of Jinnah was exemplified not so much in getting the atrocity stories manufactured and broadcast as in evading all judicial inquiry into them. For that would have knocked the bottom out of his grievance-game. Immediately the allegations were made, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, then Congress President, offered to submit them for investigation to Sir Maurice Gwyer, then Chief Justice of the Federal Court of India. The various Congress Prime Ministers also made similar offers, and a few of them refuted them by chapter and verse. Jinnah, however, was a slippery customer and pretended to be satisfied with nothing less than a Royal Commission—a demand which he quietly dropped soon after.

#### IV

In the totalitarian technique every aggression is preceded and justified by a prefabricated grievance. Hitler had a grievance and an excuse for swallowing Austria, mutilating Czechoslovakia, exterminating Poland and even invading Soviet Russia. “This is my last territorial demand”—Hitler’s epilogue of every aggression—also served as the prologue of a fresh one. Similar is the case with Jinnah. It is a far cry from the Lucknow Pact of 1916 to the Pakistan Demand of 1940. In 1916 he was known as the Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity and prided upon

<sup>1</sup> *The Constitutional Problem in India*, II, 186.

being a democrat of democrats. To-day he stalks like a dictator and the Potential Emperor of Pakistan. In between there has been a metamorphosis.

The Lucknow Pact which was intended to be the final solution of Hindu-Muslim differences has served merely as the starting-point of further Muslim demands. This is not the place to trace the constitutional or communal history of India. Suffice it to say that the British Government has done as much to appease Jinnah as it did to appease Hitler. Jinnah's famous Fourteen Points (which were really fifteen !) were formulated in 1929. Though many of these Points were opposed by the Hindus and the Sikhs and even rejected by the Simon Commission, every single one of them was granted by the time in 1935 Act came into force.

The demands were fulfilled, but Jinnah was not foolish enough to be appeased. His appetite grew with what it fed on and another set of Fourteen Points was evolved during the course of his negotiations with Jawaharlal Nehru in 1938. This was of course for safeguarding Muslim interests—and Jinnah's position as a dictator ! A dictator rides on a tiger and can never dismount. He would be writing his political death-warrant if he confesses to be appeased ! Soon, to the new set of Fourteen Points he tacked on a still newer claim—50 per cent. 'share in everything.'

Even Dr. Ambedkar who like Jinnah repudiates the Hindus and calls himself the Leader of a Nation—the Scheduled Caste Nation—feels constrained to write :  
“ It will thus be seen that every time a proposal for

the reform of the Constitution comes forth, the Muslims are there, ready with some new political demand or demands . . . The more the Muslims demand, the more accommodating the British seem to become. At any rate, past experience shows that the British have been inclined to give the Muslims more than what the Muslims themselves had asked.”<sup>1</sup>

Greatly daring, Jinnah asked for Pakistan in 1940, though he had pooh-poohed the whole idea only a few years earlier. The Muslims were no longer a minority. They no longer cared for safeguards, percentages and guarantees, in securing which Jinnah had spent thirty long years of his life. Overnight they grew into a separate nation seeking a sovereign homeland—or homelands—of their own! Jinnah began to talk the language of treaties and hostages, and occasionally even of direct action. The British Government which had the Congress already on its hands did not further want to estrange the League. Through Amery it virtually assured Jinnah that no constitutional changes would take place in India without his sanction. Through Cripps it offered—though in a guarded manner—a plan for Pakistan.

Jinnah could not, however, be put off with a remote plan. He summarily asked the British to *Divide and Quit*, here and now. Gandhi's demand for *Quit India* had at least a moral integrity behind it. Jinnah's demand for *Divide and Quit* was pure political blackmail! It was sheer ingratitude to the British, who run their Empires on the old Roman

<sup>1</sup> *Pakistan*, p. 255.

principle of *Divide and Rule*. They refused to quit in the face of the open rebellion of the Congress. They were certainly not going to do so to oblige the League. They realised once again that appeasement does not pay—either of Hitler or of Jinnah—and during the last two years, though carefully nursing the League as a counterpoise to the Congress, Imperialism has stopped further inflating the ego of the Qaid-e-Azam.

Jinnah hurt his toes very badly in trying to kick out the Unionist Ministry of the Punjab—the *P* of Pakistan—in May 1943. The League Ministry of Bengal has been as unceremoniously chucked out by Governor Casey as it was installed into office by his predecessor. Another League Ministry, that of the North-West Frontier—a 92 per cent. Muslim majority province and thus the corner-stone, the *A* of Pakistan—has been decisively defeated by the hated Congress, which has now resumed office. In Sind the League Government functions precariously on the quicksands of personal ambitions and jealousies, while in Assam it is in office only because of the negative attitude of the Congress Legislative Party. Finally, though Jinnah enjoyed a long holiday in Kashmir last year (the *K* of Pakistan), he has so far not dared to challenge the authority of the National Conference of that State, which is a non-communal mass organization like the Congress.

The Qaid-e-Azam's writ thus runs nowhere within the frontiers of his dream empire. This does not prevent him, however, from striking dictatorial attitudes and stalking as the Potential Emperor of

Pakistan. His League alone represents the Muslims, just as the Nazi party alone represented the Germans. The Fuehrer alone is entitled to speak in their name. Other Muslim spokesmen are upstarts, traitors to the cause. The nationalist Muslims particularly are anathema to him. They are Quislings, and the venerable Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, President of the Congress, is its showboy ! Jinnah's vulgar abuse of those who differ from him is of a piece with Hitler's.

## V

At the Simla Conference called by Lord Wavell in June 1945, the Muslim League's claim to be the only representative organization of the community was completely exposed. Telegram after telegram poured into the Congress President's and the Viceroy's offices contesting the League's authority. Mr. Shamsuddin Ahmed of the Bengal Krishak Praja Party called Jinnah's claim to be the sole spokesman of the Mussalmans, "fantastic, defeated and discredited." The Muslim Majlis, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema and the Ahrars have always been against the League. The numerically vast Momin community has consistently challenged Jinnah's authority and they claimed separate representation in the interim government. The Shiah's, an important Muslim minority which differs from the majority Sunnis as much as one Hindu caste differs from another, were also up in arms against the League.



Jinnah was hoist with his own petard. Just as he raised the slogan 'Islam in danger,' so also the Shiahsh shouted that 'their faith and beliefs are in danger.' If the Hindu-Muslim riots were evidence of ineradicable hatred between the two communities, there have been, unfortunately, almost annual riots between the Shiahsh and Sunnis too. Recently certain Shiahsh leaders assembled in Bombay explained in a press interview, their views which are extremely revealing.

Maulana Syed Mohamad Saeed Mujtahed and Nawab E. Ali Khan observed that "the twenty million Shiahsh Mussalmans of India would fight tooth and nail if their just demands were not granted, and that they had lost all confidence in the fairplay and sense of justice of Sunni Mussalmans or of "their (Sunnish') political organization called the All-India Muslim League." The Shiahsh claimed for themselves separate culture, traditions and mode of religious worship, as distinct from the Sunnis, and complained of the evils of Sunni majority rule. They apprehended great danger to their very existence unless their rights and privileges were adequately safeguarded in the constitution itself!

All this, it will be noticed, is a *verbatim* repetition of the Muslim League's charge-sheet against the Congress, and is thus of great significance to the impartial student of Indian politics. Personally, I deplore the differences between the Shiahsh and the Sunnis as much as I do those between the Hindus and the Muslims. The point I want to make is that in

every country and community fissiparous tendencies are always trying to come to the surface. Statesmanship lies in curbing and not fomenting such anti-social symptoms. An alien ruling power, which thrives upon the disunity of its subjects, always nurses the dissensions among them and magnifies them in its own interests, as the British have done in India for the last two hundred years.

Nichols's assertion that "the League *is* Muslim India . . . the complete expression of the Muslim will" requires no further refutation. As the final "overwhelmingly convincing" proof of his thesis, Nichols states (in capital letters) that the League has won all the by-elections, except one, held in India during the last seven years. Curiously enough Jinnah also made an exactly similar claim during the Simla Conference and almost got away with it.

It is altogether unwarranted. According to Prof. Coupland's authoritative analysis: "Since the beginning of 1938, 73 Moslem members of the Central and Provincial legislatures have been elected . . . Of these 73 seats, 40 have been won by the League, 12 by the Punjab Unionist Party in combination with the League, 15 by Independents, and 6 by the Congress."<sup>1</sup> The complete details have been given in Appendix VI, Part II, of Prof. Coupland's book. Staking tall claims is one of the chief qualifications of a dictator. It is the first step towards *Lebensraum*—or Pakistan!

<sup>1</sup> *The Constitutional Problem in India*, Part III, p. 10.

## DIVIDE—BUT NEVER QUIT!

“ I EXPECTED to find a contest between a government and a people : I found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state : I found a struggle not of principles but of races ; and I perceived that it would be idle to attempt any amelioration of laws or institutions until we first succeed in terminating the deadly animosity that now separates the inhabitants into hostile divisions.

“ Our happy immunity from any feelings of national hostility renders it difficult for us to comprehend the intensity of the hatred which the difference of language, of laws and of manners creates between those who inhabit the same village and are citizens of the same state . . . The national feud forces itself on the very senses, irresistibly and palpably, as the origin or essence of every dispute which divides the community.”

An excellent description of the Hindu-Muslim feud, (I hear the admirer of Nichols cutting in) and the *Verdict On India* has hit the nail on the head. This picture of the India of 1944 will be endorsed by every impartial reader. And the only remedy for this cancer in the Indian body politic is the knife—the knife which will cut India into Hindusthan and Pakistan.

Actually the author of the foregoing extract is not

Beverley Nichols but Lord Durham. It does not deal with Hindu-Muslim differences in India, but the Anglo-French dissensions in Canada. It was not written in 1944, but in 1839. And in the 106 years that have elapsed since then "the two nations warring in the bosom of a single state" have neither annihilated each other, nor cut Canada into an Anglistan and a Frankistan. They are proud to call themselves Canadians, the free and sovereign people of Canada.

If any two people were distinct and different from each other, they were the British and the French in Canada. Their religions, their cultures, their languages, their historical traditions—all were at variance with each other. As Jinnah would say they challenged each other at every point of the compass. Above all, they were racially of different stocks. Even geography underlines their differences. Quebec, northern New Brunswick and north-eastern Ontario are largely French and Catholic. Ontario, British Columbia, and Nova Scotia are predominantly Anglo-Saxon and Protestant.

Nichols who has made a special pleading for Pakistan could not have been unaware of Canadian history. He has harped upon the differences between Hindus and Muslims, and by resorting to Renan's definition of a nation (obviously lifted from Ambedkar's book) has drawn the facile conclusion that the Hindus and Muslims are two different nations. Unfortunately for both Nichols and Jinnah, there are a number of other authoritative definitions which can conclusively disprove the two-nation theory.

Renan himself can be quoted against the application of that theory to India and against Pakistan itself. Islam, according to Renan "is the reign of dogma ; it is the heaviest chain that humanity has ever borne . . . To the human reason Islam has only been injurious . . . It has made of the countries that it has conquered a closed field to the rational culture of the mind."<sup>1</sup>

However, reason has never killed a slogan and let us assume for a moment that the Hindus and the Muslims do form two distinct nations. So what ? It does not necessarily follow that there should be two different *States* ? The French and the English may be two nations, but they live in a common state—Canada. The British and the Dutch live together in South Africa. And in Switzerland is a harmonious mixture of *three* different nations—the German, the French and the Italian.

No better proof of the homogeneity of the Swiss people, though they belong to three different nations, speak three different languages, and profess two different religions, is needed than the fact that for more than five years they were the only tiny island of democracy in a totalitarian Europe. Lord Acton put the issue in a nutshell when he wrote : " A State may in course of time produce a nationality, but that a nationality should constitute a State is contrary to the nature of modern civilization."

<sup>1</sup> See Renan : *Nationality And Other Essays*.

## II

If India suddenly bifurcated into two nations on the 26th of March 1940, as if an earthquake had riven the peninsula, it was because Jinnah considered it an excellent tool in his hands to play the game of power-politics. The Muslim League resolution on the subject, which was passed that day at Lahore, demanded the constitution of "Independent States" in the Muslim majority zones in the North-West and the East. The claim was studiously nebulous; it lacked a local habitation and a name. The name has been supplied since then—Pakistan—but the habitation is as vague as ever! All attempts to draw out Jinnah on that subject have so far proved infructuous.

This is a typical Hitlerian technique. Never formulate your position in clear-cut terms. The moment you browbeat and blackmail the other party in conceding your demands, raise your bid, raise your voice, for you are after all a superman and enjoy a charter as large as the wind. Jinnah's Pakistan is like Hitler's *Lebensraum*, capable of any interpretation and expansion. Pending the consummation of Pakistan, he professed to be prepared to help the formation of a provisional Central Government on terms of equality, just as Hitler was prepared to co-operate with the democracies in maintaining the peace of Europe.

But the moment the British Government did try to appease Jinnah and his League by granting the Muslims parity with Caste Hindus—*though the latter*

*are numerically twice as many*—and Lord Wavell invited him to the Simla Conference in June 1945, he promptly came out with the statement that the Muslim quota in the proposed executive council of the Viceroy would be, after all, only one-third of the total !

The implication is clear : Jinnah does not want parity merely with the Congress or the Caste Hindus, but with all the other parties combined together ! The 79 million Muslims—*represented exclusively by Jinnah's nominees*—should be equal to 216 million Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis and everybody else. The tail must be able to wag the dog. Even the *Bombay Chronicle*, which never goes out of its way to criticize Mr. Jinnah, was constrained to comment : “The danger of seeking to appease Mr. Jinnah by conceding all his claims one after another, regardless of the large interests sacrificed in the process, is now becoming more and more apparent. As was to be expected, his claims are getting bigger and bigger.”

Similarly when in September 1944 Gandhi made a sincere attempt to come to terms with Jinnah on the basis of self-determination for the Muslims, and the formation of independent and sovereign states in areas where they are in absolute majority, the latter remained as intransigent and truculent as ever. He would not have the Pakistan proposed by Gandhi in terms of the Muslim League resolution of 1940. That dream empire was knocking for nearly three weeks to be ushered into the world. It would have comprised an area of over 150,000 square miles with splendid

river basins and a great port. Its population would have been more than 60 million, five-sixths of which would have been *Pak* (pure). By any standard, the proposed empire of Pakistan would have been comparable to any other country in the world.

But the Qaid-e-Azam haughtily spurned the proffered Pakistan. He condemned Gandhi's assertion that it satisfied the substance of the Lahore resolution as most disingenuous, tortuous and crooked. The moment he found that Gandhi was making an honest attempt at appeasement, his demands shot up. His Pakistan, he blandly said, envisaged the six Northern and Eastern provinces of India *as they are*. The Muslims alone were to enjoy the right of self-determination—as Jinnah determines! He had no use for plebiscite and constituent assembly and such other democratic claptraps. The 38 million Hindus and four million Sikhs and others had no voice in the partition. They were to go as chattels of Pakistan—or hostages for Hindustan!

To what length Jinnah can go in his totalitarian technique can be seen in the reply he gave to the suggestion that the Sikhs, who are a homogeneous and compact community of nearly six million in the Punjab, are also entitled to have their own independent State. What was sauce for the Muslim goose was not, however, sauce for the Sikh gander. For Jinnah coolly explained, the Sikhs were merely a sub-nation! Did not Hitler say that the Poles and others were sub-humans and as such did not need the same standards of life—or even the same quantity



of food—as the Nazi Aryans ? “ A proposition cruder than his,” writes Dr. Ambedkar, “ would be difficult to find in any political literature. The concept of a sub-nation is unheard of. It is not only an ingenious concept, but it is also a preposterous concept.”<sup>1</sup>

### III

However, Jinnah is not so much concerned with the academic issue of nationality as with his own dictatorial authority. An eminent lawyer like him would have otherwise easily seen the absurdity of “ a statutory Mussalman ”—Ambedkar’s phrase, this—like himself, who is descended from Hindu (Bhatia) stock, who speaks the same mother tongue as Gandhi, who married a Parsi lady and whose daughter has chosen a Christian husband, and who has lived and prospered for half a century in a cosmopolitan city like Bombay, claiming to have a separate nationality from that of his Hindu and Parsi and Christian fellow-citizens. The most outstanding example of the Hindu-Muslim differences which Jinnah could cite was—The Cow !

“ We eat the cow ; the Hindus worship it,” said Jinnah to Nichols. Must it therefore follow that the Indians are two nations ? Normally, I am a vegetarian ; but, occasionally, I too eat the cow—as much of it anyway as goes into a well-turned beefsteak. Do I cease to belong to the “ Hindu nation ” thereby ? . . . Then to what nation do I belong ? Not the

<sup>1</sup> *Pakistan*, p. 374. .

“Muslim nation,” because I partake of pork also—which is utter defilement for the pious Muslim—with as much gastronomic impartiality as I do beef. Where do I stand between the cow and the pig—between Hindustan and Pakistan—then?

The reader is likely to accuse me of unpardonable levity in thus reducing the two-nation controversy to the Cow and the Pig. I agree it is unfair to do so—particularly to the cow and the pig, which can only moo and grunt in protest. But then the Qaid-e-Azam considers the eating or the worshipping of the cow (among other such things) of sufficient importance to justify not merely the two-nation theory but also the two-beings theory! “We are different beings,” pontified Jinnah to Nichols. “There is *nothing* in life which links us together. Our names, our clothes, our foods—they are all different.”<sup>1</sup>

The two-beings theory is not so well-known as the two-nations theory, and one would have dismissed it as another fabrication of Nichols, had it not been for the fact that this dialogue has been edited by the Qaid-e-Azam himself. Of course there is nothing original in this proposition. Hitler also had the two-beings theory—he himself naturally being the superior being as a German! Karl Haushofer, that great exponent of geo-politics—which, translated into German, meant world conquest—gave that theory its scientific setting, though it was an ethnological and anthropological fraud.

Jinnah, too, has his Haushofer. Before me lies a

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 190 (Italics original).

book with the grandiloquent title *Pakistan, A Nation* by "El Hamza," which carries the argument to its logical absurdity. Written in a pseudo-scientific manner and bristling with charts, maps and statistics, it builds the case for the partition of India on the following grounds: The Muslims eat wheat; the Hindus rice. The Muslim "homelands" are generally drier and cooler than the Hindu areas. Camels are found only in Pakistan, while coconuts grow mostly in Hindustan. The author has even discovered distinct patterns of rainfall in the two areas. It now only remains to invent a new chemical formula of water in the Muslim "homelands" to clinch the argument for Pakistan!

Our cow and pig are thus not too far-fetched. Pakistan has had a variety of protagonists from the Indian Chaudhury Rahmat Ali, who first conceived it in *Britain*, in 1933, to the British Beverley Nichols who came to India in 1943 to propagate it. In 1933 it was dismissed as "only a student's scheme" by the spokesman of the All-India Muslim Conference and the Muslim League during his evidence before the Joint Select Committee. To-day, it has become an article of faith with the self-same League (which has swallowed the Conference in the intervening period), and a mighty weapon in the hands of Jinnah.

## IV

Pakistan has received support from various quarters and on various grounds from the pious ignorant

Muslims, who are scared by the cry of "Islam in danger," to the sophisticated Communists, who began by holding religion to be the opium of the masses, and have ended by justifying the partition of a people on the very ground of religion! The former naturally fall an easy prey to the fear and hate complex sedulously engendered in them by fanatical leaders and self-seeking propagandists. The latter have consciously deluded themselves with the equation that self-determination is equal to Pakistan!

Nothing is more amusing than to see the retrograde, medieval outlook of the Muslim League leaders championed in ultra-modern, communistic jargon. It is one of the greatest tragedies of Indian politics that the Communist Party, which was ideologically and organizationally best fitted to give an enlightened lead to the Muslim masses, has itself adopted the two-nation theory with all its suicidal implications, as much for the Muslims as for the Hindus, and, maybe, for the Communists themselves! The rank and file of the League has naturally been quick to utilise the godless Soviet analogies for the establishment of the Kingdom of God. In fairness to Jinnah however, I must add that he has completely ignored his ideological allies. The Qaid-e-Azam is certainly not the man to care for the Communists.

The principles of self-determination and national autonomy are being glibly mouthed by the Communists and other protagonists of Pakistan. They forget however that all over the modern world a conscious, comprehensive effort is being made through all

possible means "to substitute a wider allegiance, conceived in terms of common ideals, for narrower national or racial loyalties." This is true as much of Russia as of Canada or the United States. As Prof. Carr points out in his latest book: "In the Soviet Union the predominant emphasis is laid—except in the sphere of language and culture—not on the national rights of the Kazbek republic (for example), but on the equality enjoyed by the Kazbek throughout the Union with the Uzbek or with the Great Russian."<sup>1</sup> Translated in Indian terms, this would mean that emphasis ought to be laid not on the myth that the Muslims are a separate nation, but on the fact that the whole of India is the homeland as much of the Muslims as of the Hindus.

Soviet parallels are popular these days. No apology is needed therefore to quote the latter part of Act 123 of the 1936 constitution of the U.S.S.R., which seems to be completely lost sight of by the Comrades of Pakistan: "Any direct or indirect restriction of the rights of, or, conversely, any establishment of direct or indirect privileges for, citizens on account of their race or nationality, *as well as any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred and contempt, is punishable by law.*"

This chapter began with nineteenth century Canada, with its two nations warring in the bosom of a single State. It is befitting that it should end with twentieth century Russia, where several nations are united together for peace, prosperity and progress. Neither

<sup>1</sup> E. H. Carr: *Nationalism And After*, p. 65.

the Potential Emperor of Pakistan nor its British Poet Laureate is however concerned with modern political thought or the international forces which are working towards world co-operation.

It is a paradox that at a time when fifty great and small countries of the world have set their seal to the United Nations Charter at San Francisco, and have willingly shed a part of their jealously cherished sovereignty for the common good of all, we in India, who are not even recognized as a nation, are fighting the battle of the two nations ! It is not at all a paradox, however, that a British propagandist should come to India to indulge “ in the advocacy of racial and national exclusiveness and hatred and contempt ” (in the words of the Soviet Constitution), to fan the flames of bigotry and fanaticism, and to divide the Muslim from the Hindu still further. Divide—so that the British need never quit India !

## CHAPTER XIV

### ANGLO-INDIA HITS BACK

AN American soldier happened to get into a bus and sit near a local belle. Seeing her engaged in reading the latest issue of *Life*, he broke into a broad grin and said half to his neighbour, half to himself: "These Hindus understand English all right."

The lady visibly winced under this remark and snapped back: "Who do you take me for?"

"Why, aren't you a Hindu?"—asked the Yankee in an incredulous tone.

"Most certainly not. I am *not* a Hindu. I am an Anglo-Indian."

"Never heard of it. You aren't British, by any chance. And this is Hindusthan? Ain't it?"

The young lady put on her best Greer Garson manner and cooed: "Listen, soldier. This is India and I am an Anglo-Indian."

"Anglo-Indian nothing! Hang it all, girl, this is Hindusthan and you are as sure Hindu as I am American!"

This conversation piece is of *circa* 1942 when the doughboy was a newcomer to India. Since then he has known his Anglo- (as other) India and he is not likely to be dogmatic any longer about anything he sees in this country. He has heard of Pakistan and known Anglo-India at first-hand. Both *are* in Hindusthan and both deny it! The biggest mystery of

Hindusthan seems to be, the Yankee is likely to conclude, that it does not exist ! It is not on the map, not on the signboard of any port, aerodrome or railway station, not even on a postage stamp !

## II

He would not be far wrong as far as the Anglo-Indians are concerned. They are a microscopic minority, their number being estimated at anything from 140 to 400 thousand. The census figures are not an accurate guide because, at the top, some bleached Anglo-Indians pose as Europeans while, at the bottom, some others, who have nothing Anglo about them save their snobbery, try to gate-crash into its ranks. All of them were, however, unanimous in denying until lately that they belonged to Hindusthan. They considered themselves a tiny British island in the vast ocean of Hindusthan, modelled their lives and even minds upon their distant British ancestors, whose mating with Indian women in the seventeenth and eighteenth century originally created the anomaly that is Anglo-India.

From the beginning the children of the *mesalliance* disowned their mothers. They had neither a mother tongue nor a motherland. They had what Freud would call a father-fixation. It would not have been such a tragic complex, had not the father in his turn disowned his progeny ! Early in the nineteenth century, the Honourable East India Company adopted a policy of exclusion of the Anglo-Indians from the



superior cadres of civilian and military service, and deliberately cold-shouldered the community. With the opening of the Suez Canal and the establishment of the steamship services, the social links between the British and the Anglo-Indians further loosened. Since then the community has developed as an integral and independent community and has passed through various vicissitudes.

The father-fixation has however continued. The Anglo-Indian's first loyalty is to the British. To them he looks for patronage, for protection. He serves them faithfully—whenever the opportunity is given him to serve! The two great wars have thus naturally proved the golden era of Anglo-India, nearly eighty per cent. of its manhood being employed in the defence services. While the young men have distinguished themselves on the front, the young and even elderly ladies have joined the Auxiliary Services in their thousands. The W.A.C.(I) is mostly a W.A.C. (A-I).

Nevertheless Anglo-Indian leaders have not been misled by the present wave of illusory and short-lived prosperity. They yet bitterly remember the aftermath of the last war and realize too well that they can no longer rely upon the British rulers for safeguarding their interests. Long before they would be compelled to quit India politically, they have quitted Anglo-India morally, and the earlier the Anglo-Indian learns to drop the Anglo and to carry himself as an Indian, the better it will be for his future welfare. Far-sighted leaders like the late Sir Henry Gidney and Mr. Frank Anthony, the present President of

the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Association, have been persistently trying to canalise the community into the broad stream of Indian national life, so that it could take its rightful place in the body politic. After all, the Parsis, who are perhaps the richest community in India, are not numerically even half of the Anglo-Indians.

The habits, thoughts and feelings of centuries cannot, however, be changed in a decade or two, and Anglo-Indians find the journey from Father Britain, who has disowned them, to Mother India, whom they disowned so long, full of doubts and difficulties, heart-burning and even frustration. Many of them frequently raise the issue: "Why not cut ourselves from both the parents? Why not emigrate *en masse*, say to Australia or even to the Andamans and strike out on our own? Why not stake out a little bit of the world which we can proudly name Anglo-India?" Alas! It is a wishful thought, a forlorn hope . . .

### III

Anglo-India is thus undergoing the pangs of rebirth. It is humanity uprooted—or rather humanity yet unrooted, in spite of two centuries of existence. It is a tragic, a rich subject fit for the pen of an Alexander Dumas or a Maurice Hindus. It is a subject which in sheer decency Nichols should have handled with knowledge, understanding and sympathy—or not at all. For a Britisher, it is a subject to atone for, not

to pass a verdict upon. He has morally much to account and politically much to be grateful for to the Anglo-Indian.

Nichols, however, had not the least compunction in making Anglo-India the target of his decadent (which really means diseased) wit. One does not take seriously Nichols's attack upon the Hindus. A rumbling elephant is a legitimate object for the yapping of every cur in the locality. It is really fun for the elephant. But if the cur starts viciously chasing little pussy—well, that's altogether a different matter. Something like that is the case with Nichols's verdict on Anglo-India. It is not merely wanton and wicked; it is sadistic.

In his sweeping indictment of the Congress Nichols wrote: "The Nazi insistence on the superiority of one race, and the necessity of keeping its blood pure, is matched by the Brahmin's unrelenting claim to dominance and the necessity of maintaining the laws of caste."<sup>1</sup> This was rather a pointless lie, since the so-called dictator of the Congress, Gandhi himself, is not a Brahmin. Nichols's own obsession with the Nazi principle of race purity and the British practice of colour bar has been strikingly illustrated in his study of Anglo-India. The chapter-heading itself—"White And Off White"—smacks of superiority. The "off-white," of course, means the Anglo-Indian, which phrase, we are further informed in a footnote<sup>2</sup> is "a polite euphemism for half-caste."

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

Now no man with the least smattering of anthropology would use the word half-caste. There have been accidents even in ducal genealogies and from the scientific point of view every man—not excluding that apostle of Nordic superiority, the carpet-biter Hitler—is not merely a half-caste, but a quarter-caste and even worse. According to Huxley, the British are the most hybridised race in the world. The Britisher is not only a mongrel, says Huxley, but it is his mission to be a good and effective mongrel. The American is not smug like the Englishman and, in fact, he rather takes pride in the fact that in his person he represents the happy fusion of different stocks. But even the Yankee becomes a racial maniac when you mention him his fellow citizen, fellow Christian Negro—unless you accept the theory advanced by certain scientists that antagonism between the white and the black American is primarily a sexual phobia of the former.

Nichols's knowledge of Anglo-Indian history is on a par with that of anthropology. Otherwise he would not have made the astonishing proposition that in nine cases out of ten, the latter's father is British and the mother Indian. This may have been perhaps true of the year 1744, but it was an atrocious lie in 1944. There must not be even a hundred Anglo-Indians to-day who can claim a British father, for the Britisher marries an Indian or even an Anglo-Indian woman very rarely these days. For every one case of this type, I know of a dozen Indians who have married British and other White girls and their progeny calls itself

Indian, *not* Anglo-Indian. In the legal sense the term "Anglo-Indian" includes every person of European descent in the male line whose parents were habitually resident in this country. The most blue-blooded Britisher, if he happens to be born of parents habitually resident in this country, is, legally, an Anglo-Indian.

## IV

Nichols's ignorance and colour and race complex are bad enough, but he becomes positively revolting when he discusses the complexion and the marital ambition of the Anglo-Indian girl. "British and American soldiers," he tells us, "have been besieged by offers of marriage, often accompanied by considerable cash inducements." Now the prodigal Yankee, who, when he first came to India was called the 'damn-cheap Sahib,' on account of his habit of saying 'damn cheap' while paying his fare to the rickshaw or gharriwallah, needs no cash inducement from the generally penurious Anglo-Indian. His real trouble is that the U. S. Army has strictly banned such marriages. This has at least in one authenticated case led to suicide—of the enceinte girl. A casualty of the war, if there was one! As for John Bull, he is more likely to take the cash and waive the rest!

The doughboy has created moral and marital entanglements not only in Anglo-India, but wherever he has gone to fight for freedom and democracy. In

Australia there are scores of girls who have been married (in Australia), and divorced by American soldiers (after their return to the States), and who yet remain in law the rightful wives of their non-existent husbands ! In Britain itself a wave of jealousy rose in the breast of the poorly paid and shabbily clad Tommy Atkins, when he found his best girl going out with G. I. Joe in his dollar-lined silk-khaki uniform. Even the Negro soldier, who was threatened with lynching if he was seen walking with a white girl in certain southern American States, did not lack feminine company while in Britain.

Nichols's observation that the Anglo-Indian is despised not only by the Indian and the British but also by himself may be one-third true—as far as Nichols's countrymen are concerned. It is, however, extremely unfair to judge the British people by a few freak types like Nichols. As far as the Indians are concerned, we are a most catholic and diversified people and we don't bear the least ill-will for Anglo-Indians or anybody else. "In my father's mansion there is room for everybody." These are the words of Tagore if I am not mistaken. I am quite confident that if only the Anglo-Indians *think* Indian, they will find that they *are* Indians. This was exactly the advice given by Mr. B. G. Kher, the first Congress Prime Minister of Bombay, when he addressed the local branch of the Anglo-Indian Association in 1938; "I would ask your community not to be always casting longing glances at the West, but to throw yourself heart and soul into the life and movement

around you. This is your motherland. Do not look upon yourselves as aliens, but share the difficulties and the struggle for freedom in which the rest of us are engaged, and you will find you will be made quite welcome."

As for the Anglo-Indians despising themselves, let Mr. Frank Anthony, Barrister-at-Law, the President-in-Chief of the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Association, speak. His right to speak on behalf of his community cannot be challenged even by Nichols. I am quoting from the speech delivered by Mr. Anthony in the Central Legislative Assembly, New Delhi, on March 23, 1945.

"*Verdict On India* by Beverley Nichols is a scurrilous and deliberately distorted vilification of India as a whole, inspired by smug racial arrogance and a false sense of racial superiority . . . Now, Sir, let me say right at the beginning that I intend to take the buttons completely off the foils. Beverley Nichols has indulged in such unvarnished lies and in the language of the bargee, that he has forfeited the right to ordinary criticism. A man who has sunk to such depths of distortion and fabrication would be impervious to ordinary criticism. And any impartial person reading this book will inevitably come to the conclusion, which I have come to, that Beverley Nichols is just another mental gutter-snipe. Yes, Sir, just another mental gutter-snipe. His mind's eye has traversed a few gutters and from these he has sought to paint a picture of Indian life generally.

"No one will deny to him a certain capacity to

write, but hundreds of unknown scribblers to-day have an equal capacity to write. Equally, no one will deny to Beverley Nichols the fact that he has assumed the pornographic mantle of Katherine Mayo. To resort to false, lurid, pornographic writing in order to create controversy and in order, also, to create a market has not originated with Beverley Nichols.

“He merely runs true to the tradition of every shallow and pettifogging pornographer, who indulges in meretricious writing on homosexuality, venereal disease and aphrodisiacs in order to secure a market with a certain type of people. I would have had no quarrel with Beverley Nichols if he had confined himself to these subjects of homosexuality, venereal disease and aphrodisiacs. I have no doubt that he would have written with some authority, acquired either first-hand or second-hand, on these subjects. But instead, what do we find? This peripatetic, penny-shovelling, muck-raking journalistic sewer-rat has seen fit to libel—and here I would ask my Muslim friends to note that it is not merely a libel against the Hindus—to libel India generally, including the Anglo-Indian Community, which I have the honour to represent in this House.”

## v

This is certainly not the language of a person who despises himself! However, it is not possible to reproduce here the entire speech of Mr. Anthony. At the most I can quote his replies to one or two



points raised by Nichols and, for the rest, refer the interested reader to the official record of the proceedings of the Assembly. It is only necessary to add that though there is a strong official as also a pucca British bloc in the Assembly, no one stood up to defend Nichols. Let Mr. Anthony resume his sizzling speech :

“ Nichols says that the Anglo-Indian resorts to any device or any ingenuity in order to cover up the fact that he is an Anglo-Indian. I do not deny that there are renegades from my community. But does he realize, or is he aware of the fact that this renegadism is largely, if not entirely, due to the evil and pernicious system of social and economic discrimination in this country ? Anglo-Indians have been Governors of Provinces, Members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, Surgeons-General to the King, Judges of High Courts—I can name many of them—but they were only allowed to reach that position by becoming renegades from their Community and by denying their parentage. If an Anglo-Indian had the courage of his convictions to declare the fact that he was an Anglo-Indian, he would never have been permitted to reach any position of eminence, of trust and responsibility . . .

“ And can you blame the individual altogether ? I blame, more, the system which places a premium on renegadism, lying and cheating. And yet, Sir, Beverley Nichols says that this community will do anything in order to deny its origin. It is this system of pernicious social and economic discrimination

which has developed this renegadism in some Anglo-Indians. Let Beverley Nichols, and those who think like him, realize that this Community is to-day proud of its origin, proud of India and (has) decided to stand shoulder to shoulder with the other communities of India.

“ And, then, what of the part that has been played by the women of my community ? One of the smallest, if not the smallest of communities in this country, we have done more for the war effort, our women have done more than all the women of all the other communities in India put together. And, yet, at a time like this, we find Englishmen being brought out to this country and propagating lies of the foulest and vilest character and attempting to do injury to this community to which the Britisher owes, as I have said, an irreparable debt.

“ Sir, I am particularly and bitterly resentful because of the depths to which this gutter-snipe has gone in traducing the women of my community. It is very easy to point a finger at the women of any community or any race, particularly where the women have social freedom. I have too many good friends in England to point a finger of scorn, which I can very easily do, at the activities of British women to-day. Surely Nichols and his kind does realize that war upsets standards and relaxes conventions.”

We will quote just once more—the Parthian shaft of the President of the Anglo-Indian Association, who was a post-graduate student of anthropology in England :

“As an anthropologist let me tell Nichols that he is not only a half-caste, but a polygenetic, that he is the result of an age-long intermingling of the most divergent racial elements, including Mongol and Negroid elements.”

This knowledge of his heredity should be useful if Nichols ever thinks of writing a verdict on himself !

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CHAPTER XV

BY THEIR FRUITS . . .

It is amazing how propagandists reach the same goal from whatever point of the compass they may start. An instinct surer than the bloodhound's seems to guide them towards their objective. In spite of the vast difference between their background and technique, and though seventeen years divided their respective "prolonged and intensive" studies of the Indian people, both Katherine Mayo and Beverley Nichols arrived at the identical conclusion that India was a world menace!

Their premises and reasoning are, however, different. The American spinster based her verdict on India mainly on grounds of public health, after conscientiously examining the sewage systems, slums, hospitals, etc., in this country. India is a world menace because it is the home and fountain-head of all diseases and epidemics, the breeding ground of billions of dangerous bacilli. A *cordon sanitaire* must therefore be drawn against Mother India. Only John Bull should be allowed to enter the yellow-flagged area, in order to continue his sanitary and civilizing mission. After all, he has become immunized against the infection—if he has not actually thrived upon it, and increased his girth by a good few inches—during his sojourn here for the last two centuries.

As for Beverley Nichols, he was in such a hurry to

make a case for the British rule in India, that he had to develop the "world menace" stunt early in his book. His thesis is different from that of Miss Mayo. It was not the bodies of the Indians, but their souls which are the real menace to the world. Three-fourths of Indians are Hindus and Hinduism is the Religion of the Red Light !<sup>1</sup> Hinduism is filth !

The latter remark is first put in the mouth of a mythical Muslim as noted in a previous chapter. It was another Muslim—"a rising young barrister and politician"—who (we are told) presented Nichols with a copy of Mark Twain's *More Tramps Abroad*, marked at the page where there is a casual disparaging remark about the Hindu religion. It was apparently the unnamed Muslim and the American humorist who set Nichols on his search of Hinduism.

You see with what subtle yet diabolical cleverness it is done ! He artfully flatters the fanatics among the Muslims so as to win them over in advance. He quotes an eminent Yankee author as if to assure 'our American friends' of his *bona fides*. "Oh ! I am merely developing a point noted down by your great humorist,"—he tells them in effect.

And with what hypocritical humility he apologises to the Hindus themselves for the vile abuse he has poured over their religion and their gods : Really I couldn't help it, your gods being what they are—"hideous as the instincts which created them . . . representations of every vice known to man."

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Take your Ganesh, the elephant god, for example. He appears to me to be "imbued with a malevolent life . . . his limbs seemed to twitch, as though impelled by ancient lusts."<sup>1</sup> And your religion! It is "the hotchpotch of almost every fear, dream and delusion which has ever drifted through the tangled shadowy jungle of man's brain."<sup>2</sup>

It is "so peculiarly painful," goes on Nichols, to have to write all this, but then having undertaken to pass a verdict upon you, I couldn't help it. I couldn't shirk the call of truth. Justice is made of stern stuff and, after all, I owe a duty to the rest of humanity—to show what a world menace Hinduism and you, its votaries, are. You have been extremely nice and hospitable to me, but then I hardly came across one among you Hindus who could be called "fine, truthful or unselfish," none whom we British can style as a decent chap—not even your Gandhi. Really it couldn't be helped, and I am awfully sorry about it. You fellows are, of course, bound to resent all this, and "if it prompts any Indian to retort with an exposure of the faults of the modern Christian, so much the better. We could do with the lesson."<sup>3</sup>

## II

I regret I cannot accept this invitation to a slanging match. I would as much care to discuss the relative virtues of our religions as of our grandmothers.

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

Whatever we do with our bodies and souls, whether I see the light by the help of Nichols's searchlight and become a Christian, or whether Nichols follows Christopher Isherwood, who might have been England's greatest modern poet, and succumbs to the spell of Ganesh, the elephant god, the fact remains that we are the progeny of our respective grandmothers and religions in the physical and spiritual sense. Nichols is descended of a hundred Christian forefathers, and I of perhaps two hundred Hindu progenitors. But behind all of them, in the twilight of time, stood a grinning ape—or a benign god ! You can take your choice, though after reading the *Verdict* of Nichols, you are almost certain to vote for the ape !

I do not feel the least urge to defend Hinduism from the sweeping attack of Nichols. Better men than the blasphemous British propagandist have knocked their heads in vain against the rock of this religion. More than two thousand years ago, when Christ was not even born and Nichols's ancestors were living like animals in the jungle, a man called Gautama the Buddha tried to transform Hinduism out of its existence, though he himself was born of Hindu parents. To-day Buddhism counts in its fold 160 million people. Not more than a handful of them are to be found in India !

A thousand years ago the primeval force of a new-found faith swept Islam all over the globe. Wave after wave of invaders, Tartars and Afghans and Mongols, surged over India. They founded

empires, established dynasties, and ruled over Hindusthan for centuries, conducting a systematic campaign of proselytization. To-day there are more Hindus in India alone than there are Moslems in all the countries of the world put together.

For nearly five hundred years now, since Vasco da Gama came to Calicut in 1498, and the King of Portugal sent a fleet to take possession of India, Christian missionaries have been flocking into India. Portuguese and British, European and American, Catholic and Protestant, Presbyterian and Methodist, male and female missionaries; missionaries in all sorts of picturesque uniforms—from the flaming red of the Salvation Army to the white homespun of the few unorthodox ones—all of them have been assiduously trying for five hundred years now to win the Indian heathen for the Lord.

They have used every possible means and blandishment to convert him—from the utterly revolting atrocities practised by the early Portuguese missionaries to the (largely) disinterested service rendered by the American Medical Missions. The British Government, though it professes to be neutral in religious matters, has always backed up the missionaries in their work, and, in fact, maintains an Ecclesiastical Department in India exclusively for looking after the Christian churches. And yet in spite of all this, after five hundred years of high pressure proselytization, not even one in a hundred Indians is a Christian, the exact figure being 3,293,671 in a total



population of 383 million, according to the 1941 census.

*In vain with lavish kindness  
The gifts of God are strewn  
The heathen in his blindness  
Bows down to wood and stone.*

The words of this old hymn are being echoed from a thousand highways and byways all over India ! They are the lament of Christianity over Hinduism ! The latter, as Nichols ruefully remarks, is still going strong in the year of our Lord 1944. No, it is not a dying creed. It lives through the persons of 255 million human beings. The rest of the world should certainly face this fact, as Nichols advises it to do. And if, as he says, its living itself is a world menace, well, it cannot simply be helped ! Hinduism has been a menace to the world for thousands of years now,—for centuries before even Gautama, Jesus and Mahomed were born ! 255 million people cannot simply be eliminated by an atom bomb to remove that menace, or even converted to Christianity *en masse* in order to bring peace to the soul of Beverley Nichols and his fellow-missionaries.

### III

For Nichols is a missionary,—a male version of Miss Aimee Macpherson without the latter's virtuosity and sex appeal. In his *The Fool Hath Said* he tried to put across Jesus as an American publicity agent

would a new brand of soap : *He washes all your sins !* Nichols humanized Jesus ; he glamourised Him ; he modernised Him to the latest spring style of 1936, when the book was published ; he surrendered himself to Him, in a profusion of catty back-chat and worn-out clichés. He was so much a Christian then that he offered the African colonies to Germany, a slice of Australia to Japan, and himself partly to the Oxford Group and partly to Oswald Mosley !

\* Nichols ended that book with the stirring cry : *Come, Come And Pray.*

Seven years later Nichols came to India—not to pray to Christ but to curse the Hindus, to curse Hinduism, to curse the gods and goddesses in the Hindu pantheon, above all to curse Gandhi and his Congressmen, who had asked Britain to quit India. Most of them were Hindus, of course. So Hinduism certainly deserved all the poison and spittle he could eject out of his pen. Hinduism is filth ! Hinduism is a social disease ! Hinduism is full of savage life ! Hinduism is the Religion of the Red Light !

Remember this is Nichols speaking in his Christian charity—Nichols, the author of *The Fool Hath Said*, who had dedicated himself completely to Christ in 1936, but retrieved his soul just in time to serve the British Empire in 1943. However, he can quote a Biblical extract to justify his conduct. Did not St. Paul himself warn Titus against the Cretans :

One of themselves, even a prophet of their own said, The Cretans *are* always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.

"This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith."

Therefore, like a good Christian, Nichols has rebuked the Hindus sharply, though in 1936 he dared accuse St. Paul himself of being "guilty of an intolerable generalization about a whole people," and of acting against the spirit of Christ.<sup>1</sup> In 1944 he could give many points to old St. Paul in heaping savage rebuke and filthy abuse on a whole people. He remains a devout Christian still, though he may not be above taking help from Muslims when it comes to defaming the Hindus. Listen to this: "Men *cannot* advance except towards Christ. He is at the end of *every* road that leads uphill, towards the light."

In true missionary style, Nichols has indulged in a well-spiced discussion of the relative merits of Hinduism and Christianity. Personally I believe that the best religion lies in not indulging in such highly incendiary comparisons and in leaving everybody to worship his God—or not to worship Him—as he likes. Like a barker Nichols shouts: "Look at your Ganesh riding a mouse and look at my Christ nailed on the Cross! Isn't mine a winner?"

*Verdict On India* presents the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon as if they were a crowd of plutocratic revellers holding a drunken debauch in Long Island or St. Juan les Pins, or, alternatively, as a band of Japanese sharpshooters looking out for unwary British and American soldiers in the jungles of Malaya and Borneo. Nichols would have been well

<sup>1</sup> *The Fool Hath Said*, p. 218.

advised not to be jealous of the former, or afraid of the latter vision. He should have really ignored the pantheon altogether. For the gods and goddesses are no more an essential part of Hinduism than the saints and popes are of Christianity. Popular Hinduism is no doubt pantheistic, but if one studies it deeply enough, it is as uncompromisingly monotheistic as Christianity or Islam. It recognizes only one God—only one Reality—only one omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent Power, which rules the universe.

And you are at liberty to call it Brahma, Jehovah, Ahurmazda, Allah, Heavenly Father—or nothing at all ! Nothing. For it is beyond human comprehension and can be described only as *Neti ! Neti !!*—Not this ! Not that !! It is Nothing that we know—and Everything. It is Beverley Nichols and N. G. Jog and the reader who is reading these pages. It is *Verdict On India* and *Judge or Judas*. For there is nothing inanimate in this universe. Everything is touched by the Supreme Spirit. Hinduism literally

*Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.*

More. It finds not merely good but God in everything. And if the reader has begun to fear whether I am not taking him beyond his depths, let us summon Bernard Shaw to our help. "The apparent multiplication of Gods is bewildering at the first glance," writes Shaw in his latest collection of the distilled wisdom of 88 years, "but you soon discover that they are all the same God in different aspects and Functions

and even sexes. There is always one uttermost God who defies personification.

“ This makes Hinduism the most tolerant religion in the world, because its one transcendent God includes all possible Gods, from elephant gods, bird gods, and snake gods, right upto the great Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, which makes room for the Virgin Mary and modern Feminism by making Shiva a woman as well as a man. Christ is there as Krishna, who might also be Dionysus. In fact Hinduism is so elastic and so subtle that the profoundest Methodist and the crudest idolater are equally at home in it.”<sup>1</sup>

If Bernard Shaw is a little too highbrow, let us look up Mark Twain whose *More Tramps Abroad* allegedly sent Nichols in search of Hinduism. There is a character in that book, Manuel the bearer, through whose Christian lips the urbane humorist has summed up the essence of Hinduism: “ Yes, He very good. Christian God very good, Hindoo God very good, too. Two million Hindoo God, one Christian God—make two million and one. All mine; two million and one God. I got a plenty. Sometime I pray all time at those, keep it up, go all time every day, give something shrine, all good for me, make me better man; good for me, good for my family, damn good.”

Damn good, Manuel! You were a better man than many a bigoted Christian and Hindu, and Christ must not have surely denied you, whatever your

<sup>1</sup> *Everybody's Political What's What*, p. 227.

pastor may have said about your heathen practices. Nor will those two million other gods blame you in the least for having followed Christ.

## IV

If Hinduism had resided in its temples, and in its graven gods and in its Brahmin hierarchy, it would have died a thousand years ago when Mahmud of Gazni sacked the shrine of Somanath, smashed the idol and put thousands of worshippers to the sword. It would have died four hundred years ago when, in the name of Christ, the Portuguese Jesuits began to follow similar violent methods both against the Muslims and the Hindus. Afonso de Albuquerque, the Conqueror of Goa, described his crusade with true Christian fervour in a letter written on December 22, 1510 :

“ In the capture of Goa and the squandering of its farms and the entry into the Fort, Our Lord helped us much, for he wished that we should perform so great a deed . . . I then burnt the city and put everything to the sword, and for days continuously your people shed blood in them ; wherever they caught and found, no life was spared to any Mussalman and their mosques were filled up and set on fire.”

This is a fair sample of how Christianity came to India. A Jesuit historian of those times openly confessed that “ the conversion of the infidels in these parts of India is generally not being (done) through preaching and doctrine, but through other just

means"—of which Albuquerque has given an example in the above quotation ! Saint Francis Xavier himself, the Patron Saint of the Indies—whose embalmed body is still supposed (by pious Christians) to bleed during its periodical expositions !—took a hand in pulling down the temples of the 'false' gods and breaking their idols !

I have always wondered why the Christians like Francis Xavier and Beverley Nichols—to lump the saint and the sinner together—profess such abhorrence of idols, considering that Roman Catholic churches from St. Peter's downwards are often cluttered up with idols of Virgin Mary and the various Saints, not to talk of Jesus himself. "The ecstasies of the saints," writes Aldous Huxley, "are represented by seventeenth-century artists as being frankly sexual."<sup>1</sup> Again, "A Christian church in southern Spain, or Mexico, or Sicily is singularly like a Hindu temple. The eye is delighted by the same gaudy colours, the same tripe-like decorations, the same gesticulating statues ; the nose inhales the same intoxicating smells ; the ear and, along with it, the understanding, are lulled by the drone of the same incomprehensible incantations, roused by the same loud, impressive music."<sup>2</sup> "European peasants not only worship Saints and the Virgin as Gods, but will fight fanatically for the ugly little black doll who is the Virgin of their own church against the black doll of the next village."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ends And Means*, pp. 243-244.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Shaw : *Everybody's Political What's What*, pp. 227-228.

Hinduism, Nichols tells his readers, has no Church, no Pope, no Bible, but most important of all no History. One does not know what to make of this fatuity, for the Hindus do have their Church, their Pope, their Bible and their History—the longest continuous history of all religions. True, it is not *recorded* history, for the simple reason that the origin of Hinduism is lost in the mist of antiquity. But this makes the religion no more false than the loss of his family tree would make a person a bastard. Even the origin of Christianity and Christ himself are not free from historical doubt.

As for the Hindu Bible—the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*—they have come to us mostly intact and untampered through oral traditions. Eminent European scholars have paid unstinted tribute to the beauty and nobility of the four *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, which form the Hindu Bible. Schopenhauer declared that the *Upanishads* had been the solace of his life, and would be the solace of his death. Voltaire considered that the *Yajur Veda* was the most precious gift for which the West had ever been indebted to the East. The great Indologist Max Muller gave his verdict that “the Vedic literature opens to us a chapter in what has been called the education of the human race to which we can find no parallel elsewhere.” Emerson frequently acknowledged his debt to Hindu scriptures.

Nichols naturally does not mention these international tributes to the Hindu scriptures. For him, great Orientalists like Sir William Jones, Jacobi,



Macdonnel, Sylvan Levi, Deussen, Keith, Bhandarkar, B. N. Seal, who devoted a life-time to the study of the sacred books of the Hindus, did not simply exist. He has ignored even his own famous contemporaries like Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard, Christopher Isherwood and Somerset Maugham who are devoted students of Hindu religion and philosophy. Nichols's main authority on Hinduism and the Hindus generally is Abbé Dubois, whom he has frequently quoted with great relish. Needless to add, the Abbé was the mentor of Miss Mayo as well !

Who was this great authority on India ? He was a Frenchman, a Jesuit Missionary, who came to India as a refugee from the French Revolution in 1792 and lived here until 1823. As a missionary he was a complete failure. He confessed : " For my part I cannot boast of my successes in this sacred career . . . During the long period (of 31 years) I have made, with the assistance of a native missionary, in all between two and three hundred converts of both sexes. Of this number two-thirds were Pariahs or beggars ; and the rest were composed of Sudras, vagrants, and outcasts of several tribes, who being without resource, turned Christian in order to form connexions, chiefly for the purpose of marriage, or with some other interested view."

So sour the Abbé had become by his failure that he roundly declared that " the time for conversion had passed away, and under existing circumstances there remains no human possibility of bringing it back." The loss of the Christian Church was the gain of the

East India Company. For the French missionary failure proved to be a most successful British propagandist. His *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* has been the source book of missionaries, civilians and foreign writers for more than a century now. It is, of course, frequently quoted by drain inspectors like Miss Mayo and self-appointed judges like Beverley Nichols. For the Abbé was both. He was neither an impartial observer nor a sociological student, but a muckraker pure and simple. Listen to this candid admission :

“ There is one motive which above all others has influenced my determination. It struck one that a faithful picture of the wickedness and incongruities of polytheism and idolatry would by its very ugliness help greatly to set off the beauties and the perfections of Christianity.”<sup>1</sup>

The needs of God for once coincided with those of Cæsar. The Honourable Company was that time advertising for “ authentic documents ” for the use of their historiographers and the Abbé promptly submitted his manuscript which was in French. It was approved and the company purchased it for 2,000 star pagodas, which should be worth about 15,000 rupees in the present currency. Subsequently the volume was drastically revised—and almost entirely rewritten, probably to suit the requirements of the Company. For this further service the good Abbé was paid his return passage to France and a handsome pension for life !

<sup>1</sup> Abbé Dubois : *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, p. 9.

While tracking down the French missionary-*cum*-British propagandist, we have quite lost the thread of our argument. Where were we? Yes, the Hindus have their history as well as their Bible. And they have their Popes, too, in their Shankaracharyas. Like the Christian Popes, their Hindu opposites have lost much of their prestige and power. But in religious disputes their word is still considered to be final, and they are still revered by the masses. Similarly, we do have a church, if thereby is meant ritual and formalism of worship, though they may vary according to the particular deity and locality.

## V

I am writing all this not in order to make a case for Hinduism, but to expose the slanderous falsehoods and crooked distortions of Nichols. Hinduism as practised has its failings and drawbacks like all other religions. The caste system and untouchability, whatever may have been the justification of their origin, have branded it as a religion of inequality and privilege. Particularly, untouchability is a monstrous doctrine, viewed from any point of view. It is a denial not of equality but of humanity itself and every Hindu must be ashamed of it. It wrung out from Gandhi—a devout Hindu if there was one—the tortured cry “I would far rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lives.” Of course, the truth-twisting Nichols has not quoted this, while

broadcasting Ambedkar's political catchword that Gandhi is the greatest enemy of the untouchables !

How does the caste system operate in India at present ? It consists of four classes : the real Brahmins—i.e., the British bureaucracy ; the real Kshatriyas—i.e., the British army ; the real Vaisyas, i.e.—the British traders, and the real Sudras and untouchables—i.e., the Indian people ! I am of course drawing upon Will Durant, the famous American author, whose masterly *The Case For India* has been banned in this country.

There are thousands of enlightened Brahmins whose houses are to-day open to the Pariah—now called the Harijan, the man of God. But the little islands of the White Brahmins—the clubs and the gymkhanas and the lidos—are yet too sacrosanct to be trod by the untouchable Indian, be he a Nehru or an Aga Khan or a Tata. The cockney batman who polishes the shoes of an Indian military officer may have a swim at Breach Candy in Bombay, but the latter will never be allowed to pollute its water. If any one factor has given the mortal blow to untouchability, it is the railway. There the high caste Hindu has not merely to touch the untouchable, but to rub shoulders with him, to drink with him, even to eat with him. But even during railway travels the twice-born Anglo-Saxon arrogantly exhibits his class exclusiveness. He occasionally refuses to allow any “ nigger ” to travel in his compartment and at times will forcibly eject the latter from his lawful berth. Even Indian Civil Servants and the exalted Executive Councillors.

of the Viceroy are known to have suffered this indignity at the hands of a drunken box-wallah or a swaggering subaltern.

Do I hear the reader saying that Durant's quotation and the other foregoing observations are somewhat dated? Well, then, read this extract from a letter which Flight-Lieut. G. H. Loman, Labour candidate for Kingston-on-Thames at the last General Election, contributed to the *Manchester Guardian* of July 9, 1945 :

"People talk of the evils of the caste system. But they seldom realise that the most exclusive caste is the white man's. Your Britisher in India has always lived in a little England transported overseas, and generally speaking, has come into close contact only with sweepers, bearers, coolies and water carriers—all admirable people but not likely to represent the average culture of the land. It was to this life of narrow privilege that our English soldiers, sailors and airmen came."

"Suttee, thuggee, infanticide, enforced widowhood," writes Nichols, "—these were all part and parcel of the Hindu religion."<sup>1</sup> With equal (in)justice one may say that burning of the heretics, pogroms, white slave traffic, and the Reno divorce are part of Christianity. The Inquisition did burn heretics by the thousands, and witch-hunting was a popular pastime in Europe until the last century. The pages of Christianity are defiled by the bestiality of the pogroms from the earliest to the latest times. As for

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 75.

divorce a wife has only to go to Reno and plead that the husband's moustaches titillate her too much, to get a divorce certificate. Pope Clement II got a rake-off from prostitutes, while Pope Sixtus IV operated in a big way and built a brothel himself !<sup>1</sup> They had really made themselves the Popes of the Religion of the Red Light !

However, as I observed earlier, I do not desire to enter a slanging match with Nichols. Let us therefore merely clarify the facts about the alleged parts and parcels of the Hindu religion. Let us first take Suttee, the inhuman practice of burning widows on their husbands' funeral pyre. The nearest parallel to it is the entombing alive of their wives and slaves with the corpses of the Egyptian pharaohs. Or we may say that Suttee was the Hindu wives' version of the Japanese hara-kiri, or rather *junshi* (servants following masters in death). On their husband's death they literally lost face, shaved their heads, broke their bangles, removed their ornaments and went into perpetual mourning. Instead of undergoing all these indignities, a few of the more woe-begone among them preferred to end their life along with their lord's.

Note, however, that this is a tale of long, long ago and even then was true only of a microscopic minority. Suttee was not part and parcel of the Hindu religion. It was merely a most iniquitous social practice amongst the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. Re-

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Sanger's *History of Prostitution*, also Upton Sinclair's *Profits of Religion*.

marriage and even divorce were free and common among the lower castes, which form the bulk of the Hindus. Even among the two top classes Suttee was by no means a *custom*, as it is often wrongly called. It was merely an occasional occurrence. It was permissive, neither compulsory nor common. It was the exception, not the rule. The widows were not dragged to the pyre as the alleged witches were to the stakes in eighteenth century Britain, or the Negroes are dragged to the lynching tree in twentieth century America. It was not an orgy of blood-lust, but a heroic if horrible self-immolation. You must admit that, howsoever you condemn it.

There are no suttees in India in the twentieth century. There were very few even in the nineteenth, or at any rate after Lord William Bentinck banned it in 1831. This is one of the few instances where the British Government has taken a positive step in social progress, instead of allying itself with reaction in the name of religious neutrality. But this practice was dying out even before the British Government made it illegal.

Writing in the first quarter of the last century, the Abbé Dubois wrote : " In the southern parts of the Peninsula of India, suttees are seldom seen. I am convinced that in the Madras Presidency, which numbers at least thirty millions of inhabitants, not thirty widows allow themselves to be thus burnt during a year."<sup>1</sup> That patron saint of all anti-Indian propagandists could witness not more than one or

<sup>1</sup> *Hindu Manners, Customs And Ceremonies*, p. 357.

two suttees during all his thirty-one years' stay in this country a century and a quarter ago. And yet Nichols has the cool audacity to write: "If the British quit India, it is a fairly safe bet that suttee will return."<sup>1</sup>

The next parcel in Nichols's list is Thuggee. The Thugs—the professional dacoits and assassins—had as much to do with Hinduism as Dick Turpin or Jack the Ripper had to do with Christianity. In fact if you look up the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, you will find that though the Thugs worshipped Kali, the Hindu goddess, they traced their origin to seven Mahomedan tribes! I may further inform Nichols that Colonel Medows Taylor's *Confession of a Thug* is not a disquisition on Hinduism but a story of dacoities and murders. Let us drop the other two parts and parcels of Hinduism—infanticide and enforced widowhood are no more common in India than abortion and divorce in the West—and hurry to the "Devadasis"—the slaves of the gods—to whom Nichols has devoted a lyrical passage like Miss Mayo before him.

Yes, Devadasi sounds nice. Who is she?

## VI

She is a sample of India's spirituality, says Nichols. Actually she is simply a prostitute whether she lives in the precincts of a temple or in the red light districts of the big cities. It is said that the Parisian never

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 213.



visits the *Folies Bergere*. That display of feminine flesh adorned by a few ribbons is meant solely for the foreign tourist. I have visited all the famous temples of South India, where alone the Devadasi cult flourished, but never once did a Devadasi accost me, while troops of them seem to be awaiting the Mayos and Nicholises !

This myth of Devadasis must be finally exploded now. In medieval India there may have been Devadasis attached to temples, just as there were Vestal Virgins in ancient Greece consecrated to the goddess Vesta. But their successors at present are plain prostitutes, catering not to gods but to men. And their number in the whole of India at present is less than that of the street-walkers of London, or the demi-mondes of Paris, or the glad-eye girls of New York, or even the male prostitutes of Berlin in the late twenties.

Nor need the boy from Milwaukee, whom Nichols has mischievously dragged into the discussion, or the Midlands go to the interior of India to find and write home about them. For all the Devadasis in India seem to have now deserted their gods and congregated in Bombay and Calcutta and Madras and Chittagong. Who told Nichols that "the prostitutes have been driven out of the big cities since the war, which has flooded India with American soldiers ?"<sup>1</sup> Not a Devadasi, one hopes ! According to Dr. Souren Ghose, Director of Social Hygiene, Government of Bengal, the number of prostitutes in Calcutta has increased

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 75.

from 22,000 in 1938 to 45,000 towards the end of 1944. "Girls were brought to Calcutta from different parts of the province as also from Kashmir, Punjab, U.P., Orissa and Madras."<sup>1</sup>

The Devadasis have occupied more space than they deserved. But the unpleasant task could not be shirked because such is the evidence on which Nichols has based his verdict on Hinduism. We promise, however, to switch off the red light with a quotation from the Abbé: "The Courtesans or dancing girls attached to each temple . . . are called *Devadasis* (servants or slaves of the gods), but the public call them by the more vulgar name of prostitutes . . . Nevertheless, to the discredit of Europeans it must be confessed that the quiet seductions, which Hindu prostitutes know how to exercise with so much skill, resemble in no way the disgraceful methods of the wretched beings who give themselves up to a similar profession in Europe, and whose indecent behaviour, cynical impudence, obscene and filthy words of invitation are enough to make any sensible man who is not utterly depraved shrink from them with horror. Of all the women in India it is the courtesans, and especially those attached to the temples, who are the most decently clothed."<sup>2</sup>

The Abbé seems to have roamed far and wide indeed to collect erring lambs for his flock.

Nichols has cited the "Child Marriage Restraint Act," popularly known as the Sarda Act, as "a

<sup>1</sup> *People's War*, (Bombay) February 11, 1945.

<sup>2</sup> *Hindu Manners, Customs And Ceremonies*, pp. 584-587.

clear-cut example of Christianity conquering Hinduism." It is true that the Act—or the Bill, to be precise—was opposed by the orthodox Hindus in the name of Hinduism, and also that it has proved mostly ineffective. But the fact remains that it was moved in the Legislature by a Hindu, and that by its passage the reformers had won a decisive victory. *The Act was on the statute-book, and it was the duty of the British Government to enforce it with all the power at its command.* It did not discharge it, probably, because its administrative machinery was more useful in putting down political agitation than in furthering social reform.

Whatever the obscurantists and propagandists may say, child marriage is not an essential of Hindu religion. In ancient times Hindu girls chose their own husbands. Early marriage has nevertheless become a social custom in India. It is common as much among Hindus as Muslims, and even among Christians, for the Bible has nowhere expressly forbidden early marriages. So the Sarda Act was a clear-cut example of Christianity conquering not only Hinduism, as Nichols says, but also Islam—and above all, Christianity itself!

Nichols has naturally harped upon the Hindu opposition to the Sarda Act and drawn sweeping deductions from it. The Muslims, however, were as much against it as were the Hindus, if not more. "It is noteworthy," remarks Dr. Ambedkar, "that the Muslims opposed the Child Marriage Bill . . . on the ground that it was opposed to the Muslim canon

law. Not only did they oppose the Bill at every stage but when it became law, they started a campaign of Civil Disobedience against that Act.”<sup>1</sup>

The impartial observer would say that the Act was opposed not by Hindus and Muslims as such, but by the reactionary elements among both the Hindus and Muslims. It is these who always raise the cry of ‘religion in danger.’ The record of Christianity also is not different. The Christian church has always stood for the established order, for vested interests, for reactionary elements. It has ever been an enemy of reason, reform and progress.

All the discoveries of European scientists from Galileo to Pavlov have been done in the teeth of the opposition and even persecution of the church. For centuries the Christian church considered it an article of faith that the sun moved round the earth. Many Catholic states in the world still refuse to teach their children Darwin’s theory of the descent of man as being against Christianity. And when the first test-tube baby was born—there are many of them happily living in America and Britain—every pious Christian got a fit of apoplexy. When he recovered, he hurriedly opened his Bible and began to read :

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness : and let them have dominion over the fish . . . ”

But before his eye came the vision of a spectacled figure in white, standing near the window and peering

<sup>1</sup> *Pakistan*, p. 223.

into the test-tube in his hand. *And Man Said, let us make man . . .*

## VII

“ By their fruits shall ye judge them,” said Christ. “ We will obey this injunction, we will put the fruits of Christianity and Hinduism side by side,” added Nichols. And he has enumerated the fruits of Hinduism like Child Marriages (which is a *social* custom among *all* Indian communities, as we have seen), Suttee (which ended 150 years ago), Thugee (which was not of Hindu origin at all), the Devadasis (who shifted their attention from god to man and became cosmopolitan prostitutes long ago), and the Caste System (though Hinduism did not certainly create the White Super-Brahmin).

Nichols somehow forgot, however, to list a few fruits of Christianity, to be put side by side with those of Hinduism. The reader will naturally expect this omission to be repaired here. It is really amazing how any Christian can raise up his head and talk of his religion at a time when the Christian nations of the world are engaged for the second time in three decades in mutual massacre. Seven and a half million persons were killed in the first world war. In the second the figures are estimated to be twice as many. Which means that nearly 23 million people—most of them Christians—have killed each other in two wars !

Fruits of Christianity ?

Note that these figures are of combatants alone. The number of civilian casualties in world war two has reached almost astronomical proportions. The Nazis are reported to have killed 26 million human beings in their ghastly concentration camps, while ten million people—one sixth of Japan's homeland population—were killed, injured or rendered homeless by Allied air raids. The very first atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima literally annihilated nearly a hundred thousand men, women and children in one moment of doom.

#### Fruits of Christianity ?

Of Christianity in practice and Christianity in principle, too, if we are to believe the fire-eating Bishops and lesser clergy, who trumpet blood-curdling yells of hatred and murder in the name of the Prince of Peace.

If any religion has become a world menace, it is Christianity as practised in the West in the twentieth century, which allied itself with Imperialism as well as Fascism, which has become the handmaid of the white exploitation of the coloured people of the world, and which is leading its votaries towards mutual extermination and dragging the human species itself towards extinction with the help of atom bombs !

#### Fruits of Christianity ?

Now let us look from another angle at the country from which Nichols himself came to sit in judgment over India. Britain is of course a very Christian country. In 1938 babies born to unmarried mothers in England and Wales numbered 26,739. But in 1943

no fewer than 43,105 babies—one in every 14 born—were without a legal father. British authorities were alarmed at the appalling increase in illegitimacy since the war began—said the report from which this is taken. Not only were they worried about the moral principles involved, but they were also concerned at the fate which may overtake many of those war babies.

Fruits of Christianity ?

The Christian clergy are naturally far more upset than the secular authorities. The British Methodist Conference held at Nottingham on July 21, 1945, ruefully declared that Britons are becoming an alcoholic and immoral people on an unprecedented scale. A report issued by the Conference asserted that *one out of every eight children* in England is conceived out of wedlock.

Fruits of Christianity ?

Fruits of 1,945 years of Christianity, complete with Church, Pope, Bible and History. Sorry, for Pope read the Archbishop of Canterbury.

\* \* \* \*

Much against one's will, almost unconsciously, this chapter is becoming an essay in comparison, and it is therefore time to close it. For unlike Nichols I hold that comparisons are nowhere more odious than among two religions. I am rather heterodox myself, but I respect the orthodoxy of the other fellow. Whatever else I may not have inherited from Hinduism, I have imbibed an abiding tolerance for all religions—Hinduism not excluded. I may not

believe in the Fatherhood of God, since there is a Jewish god and a Christian god and a Muslim god and a Parsi god, not to talk of the thirty-three hundred million of Hindu gods—all at loggerheads with each other, all apparently shouting at the top of their voice—"I alone am the real God. Thou art false and a fake!"

But I do believe with all my heart in the brotherhood of man whatever his colour, creed and income. Therefore my main accusation against Nichols is not that he has heaped obscene abuses on the Hindu gods, but that he has reviled in the grossest terms 255 million human beings, "who remain bowed at the feet of the idols." In judging them in a prejudiced and perverse manner and indicting them of all sorts of social and moral abuses, he has betrayed his own Christianity much as Judas betrayed Christ Himself.

As if he was slightly ashamed of his performance, Nichols has tried to cover up his profane verdict by the hypocritical remark that "It is an attack on a system; it is not an attack on a people." But the system can operate only through the people. Hinduism is not a natural phenomenon like the law of gravity. It is a system of religion, a code of conduct, and must stand or fall by the men and women who profess it. So the attack on the system is an attack on the people—255 million of Hindus, among whom he could not find a single fine, truthful, unselfish person, "except for those who had shaken themselves free



from the influence of the drug . . . for drug it is.”<sup>1</sup>

DRUG !

However the most abominable thing that Nichols found in the Hindus was not their religion at all. It was their politics, their patriotism. It was *Quit India*—the challenge to the mighty British Empire. It was not really the millions of gods who so much mattered to Nichols as the millions of Congressmen who, though they were mainly Hindus, were also Muslims and Parsis and Sikhs and Christians, too. They were Indians all—Indians first and last.

Nichols betrayed himself completely when he gave the heading *Heil Hindu!* not to the chapter on Hinduism, but to the one on Gandhi and the Congress—the *piece de resistance* of his book.

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 65.

## CHAPTER XVI

### PRIMA DONNA MEETS THE PRESS

DOG, they say, does not eat dog. This saying is frequently quoted among newspapermen, probably because they have to do so much barking if not biting as part of their daily work, that they cannot simply afford to use their claws and teeth against each other.

Beverley Nichols has been a journalist among other things. He came to India in the capacity of a correspondent of the Allied Newspapers, though he might have remained here in his own right as a propagandist. It was thus natural that the Indian press should pay some attention to a visiting foreign journalist, particularly when he was moving in exalted circles and seemed to be engaged on some mysterious errand. The press hounds were quickly on his track and even indulged in some friendly baiting and ragging.

The first half of 1943 was what is known in newspaper parlance as the silly season. The Bengal famine had not developed into the terrible holocaust it proved to be and once Gandhi's fast was successfully over, politics again became the closed book it was since August 1942. Some diversion was needed from the strain of the war, and Nichols came in handy for that purpose. A well-known writer like him provided good and timely 'copy.' No wonder then that reporters interviewed him, columnists occasionally gossipped

about him, and even leader writers commented upon the egregious stuff he was cabling to his paper, and which the Propaganda Department in its wisdom thought of sufficient moment to cable back to India. It was all rather idiotic and absurd but, as I said, it was the silly season.

The Bombay Journalists' Association even invited him to address them, as it usually does in the case of foreign journalists visiting this city. Similar invitations were extended to him by a few other bodies like the Progressive Group, and as usually happens on such occasions, there was plenty of friendly banter and even heated heckling. "After all," the journalists and Progs thought, "Nichols is one of us, and it is our privilege to entertain him and be entertained by him."

At times the reception may have been boisterous—that of the journalists was—but there was definitely no malice in it. Our press boys have rather a habit of going at a tangent and plying the guest of the day with all sorts of questions from Einstein's Theory of Relativity to the sex life of Stalin. The journalist, you know, is supposed to be omniscient. I was not present at Nichols's meeting, but I yet vividly recall the terrific barrage to which Louis Fischer, the distinguished American journalist, had to submit at a similar gathering some years ago.

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## II

The experience was not apparently happy for Nichols. One can understand this considering that he was then nursing his infected foot and was not in a physical condition to stand the strain. But, then, having voluntarily agreed to address the journalists, he should have grinned and forgotten the whole incident. He himself was a journalist and should have realized the inconsequential, if not altogether innocuous, nature of the show. And there were at least a few journalists who expressed their regret for 'the rough house' given to him, in the next day's papers. That was sufficient *amende honorable*, if any was necessary at all.

The affair was soon forgotten—until the first copy of *Verdict On India* arrived from Britain at the fag-end of 1944. There, in a chapter devoted to the 'Gentlemen Of The Press,' was a highly coloured version of the incident and a sweeping, malicious attack on the Indian press—which, of course, became the *Hindu* press. "I was face to face with hatred—mass hatred," writes Nichols of the meeting. "Here was the slogan *Quit India* come to life . . . Here, in spirit if not in practice, was the vanguard of the ignoble army of saboteurs . . . There was murder in those men's eyes !"

This was, to say the least, startling. But more was to follow. Nichols had passed the final verdict upon the Indian press. "It is a hotchpotch of rumour, prejudice and ignorance." "There is nothing even

vaguely comparable with the corruption and dishonesty of Hindu journalism." It is "the infantile paralytic of world journalism." It is always "libelling, lying, snarling, spitting . . . singing a Hymn of Hate against the British Raj," which allows it "a freedom of expression which would be singular in time of peace and is staggering in time of war."<sup>1</sup>

Dog, it seems, can and does eat dog. At any rate the white British dog who came here in 1943 has done his best to eat the brown Indian dogs. It despises them, almost disowns them as belonging to the same species. "You curs, you infantile paralytics," it bares its teeth and hisses, "how dare you bite me—me, the *prima donna* of dogs (or bitches, to be grammatically more accurate) . . . *How wow wow?*"

However, let me drop this canine simile in spite of the hydrophobic abuses heaped by Nichols on the Indian press. He probably considers himself qualified to indict it of libelling, etc., in view of the capital performance he has given of these capacities from the first page to the last of *Verdict On India*, which is not merely a hymn but an epic of hate. And throughout the book, Nichols has carried himself like a *prima donna*, a *prima donna* with faded charms and moth-eaten gowns, painted and plucked for the occasion, but a *prima donna* all the same.

*Oh my deah!* They have got me in bigger type than the assault on Kharkov, bless my soul, bigger than the Russian offensive itself. Of course they have given my photograph (taken some 20 years ago) . . . Look

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, pp. 86-94.

Fifi ! There is even a cartoon of mine—or rather of my foot—which is rather naughty, ain't it, darling ? After all my poor legs are not what they were when I sang before the American Prince of Wales . . .

Such dialogues with his hosts or Hussein, the bearer, seem to have been the daily morning ritual of Nichols. In spite of the utter contempt he professes for the Indian press, he bought as many papers as he could lay his hands upon every morning, gloated over the references to him, even measured their types and, of course, pasted them in his file. When the contracts cease and the applause dies down, when the beaus no longer pay court, these yellowing files are often the only solace that the *prima donna* has, the only link with the glory that is dead.

So obsessed Nichols was by his vanity and self-importance, that he took every little thing written about him seriously, even if it was manifestly ludicrous. Like a pompous ass he writes in the Foreword : “ One paper so far lost its sense of humour and proportion as to announce that I had been offered the post of Viceroy.” Another British celebrity, Noel Coward, who visited India in 1944, went to the other extreme and crooned : “ They call me bigger than Gandy.”

Really it was Nichols who seems to have left his sense of humour and proportion at home. There was obviously as much chance of his being appointed the Viceroy of India as of being transformed into the Queen of Sheba. The *Bombay Sebtinel* was merely indulging in a leg-pull when it made that remark in

its daily humorous column called 'Twilight Twitters,' which always begins with the legend *You will hardly believe that . . .* It is unbelievable that any man in his senses should take such a remark seriously.

"Tell it not to a soul, Fifi," said the *prima donna*, "but the Duke proposed to me. Actually! But how could I . . . he is not even half my age . . ."

### III

One would have thought that after the bitter experience at the Journalists' Association, Nichols would have vowed not to address another meeting of Indians in his life: Any normal man who was one-tenth so indignant would have made the decision then and there. Not so the extrovert Nichols. With masochistic fervour he asked for more from "the ignoble army of saboteurs." Within ten days he addressed another meeting in Bombay. The theme was the same—Mr. and Mrs. Smith. The audience was similar. The foot was almost the same.

What was new was a daring act of exhibitionism specially composed for the occasion. The *prima donna* decided to go all out to captivate the audience, infantile paralytics and all. In spite of her infected foot and bulging middle, she decided to go out of her way and execute a high kick which was bound to bring the house down.

Let me give a contemporary record of the performance: "With a dramatic gesture Mr. Beverley Nichols, a noted British journalist, tore into bits a

summons issued upon him by the military authorities, directing him to appear before a staff Captain of a recruiting office in Bombay, and consigned it to the waste paper basket, at a meeting held in Taj Mahal Hotel (Bombay) on Wednesday (May 5, 1943) evening under the auspices of the Progressive Group.

“He read out the full text of the order, which required that he should present himself before the authorities and submit himself to examination by the National Service Advisory Commission. The order also stated that he was entitled to second class fare.

“After throwing away the torn bits of the order, he observed that India was a land of mysteries, but all the mysteries were not Indian.”<sup>1</sup>

Needless to say this performance was a roaring success. It is amazing in the circumstances that not a breath of this sensational episode has entered the 256 pages of the *Verdict On India*. You find chronicled there the most trivial experiences of Nichols in India. You come across even his temperature chart, but not a word of this heroic gesture—the highlight of his public appearances in Bombay—is mentioned there.

Is it because he was ashamed of his exhibitionism, that the incident is quietly dropped from his Indian saga? He was, of course, playing to the gallery—to the Indian gallery. He was indulging in mock heroics for winning cheap applause from the army of ignoble saboteurs. The summons, though it implied that Nichols was shirking war duty, was a personal matter

<sup>1</sup> *The Bombay Chronicle*.



between him and the Army authorities, who presumably did not know then that writing the *Verdict On India* was itself a war effort of the highest order, for which he deserved a George Cross at the very least !

The Indian audience viewed the summons-tearing with as much delight as they would a strip-tease act. Both come our way very rarely, and no wonder there was a chorus of encore. The British and American readers of Nichols who have all been patriotically discharging their military service are, however, likely to be indignant as much over his exhibitionism as his evasion, and hence he seems to have suppressed the story of the most heroic thing he did in India.

#### IV

The abuse which Nichols heaped upon the heads of Indian journalists is understandable considering that the press hounds got scent of his propaganda mission no sooner than he arrived in this country, and began to ferret out his dirty lies one by one. His sweeping abuse of the Indian press, a few examples of which have already been cited, is worthy of Goebbels and Streicher at their best. He has run down the Indian press in every possible way. He has criticized the small circulation of the newspapers in this country, forgetting that barely 12 per cent. of the population is literate, after 150 years of British rule. The percentage of effective literacy—in the sense of being able to read and follow a newspaper—will work out at still

less. Then there is the grinding poverty, which makes the newspapers a luxury for the masses.

That the Indian journalists do not earn a living wage is a crying grievance, but it is explained not so much by the smallness of circulation as by the narrow outlook of the newspaper proprietors. The Indian press has, fortunately, not passed so far into the hands of newspaper barons like Rothermere or Kemsley. Our proprietors are mostly of the bourgeois type, who while they allow their editors considerable latitude, unlike the British barons, hold their purse-strings rather tight. The war, however, has indirectly blown some good to the hard-up journalist, for most of the newspaper proprietors, instead of shelling out all their excess profits to the Income Tax authorities, distribute a part of them to their own staff in the form of bonus and an occasional raise in salary.

This is by the way. To return to Nichols, the moral he has drawn from the poverty of Indian journalists—that only duds and black sheep are attracted to the profession—is perverted like his other morals. All over the world the press is considered an adventure and a mission, and not merely a means of making money. It has a glamour all its own, an idealism which has survived the mammon-worship of the press barons. The position of working journalists is anomalous in Britain and even in America, where the income of a popular columnist may run into six figures. “Men with University degrees may be paid less than compositors who merely tap the keyboards of type-setting machines. The highest rewards given to

editors and their principal assistants are usually lower than those of business managers and successful canvassers for advertisements.”<sup>1</sup>

In India journalism has yet to become a profession. It remains what it was a century ago—a mission ! As a working journalist I resent nothing more than this mental approach, as it practically means handing over oneself to exploitation. But the missionary traditions remain strong in this country, where the press is considered to be one of the principal means of winning our political freedom. The Indian journalist, whether he is a humble sub or an exalted top-ranker, is a political being *par excellence*. Politics is the breath of his nostrils, and no wonder he got into the hair of propagandist Nichols. There was a substratum of truth in the latter’s hysterical outbursts upon the gathering of Bombay journalists : “ Here was the slogan *Quit India* come to life.” As I think of it, it seems a motto worthy of being emblazoned on the coat of arms of the Indian press.

No wonder then that, to my knowledge, scores of young men and women, who have a safe and well-paid job in a bank or a government office, are prepared to chuck it for the precarious existence of a journalist, if only they can secure an opening in some newspaper office. They know that most political leaders of India began as or grew into journalists. Tilak was a journalist. Gandhi has been a journalist. Azad is in fact a journalist’s pen-name, which has supplanted the real name of the present Congress President. No

<sup>1</sup> Wickham Steed : *The Press*, p. 35 (Penguin).

wonder either, considering that Azad literally means "free." And, finally, Nehru remains the despair of all journalists, for few of them can turn out copy with his ease and polish. The young men who enter Indian journalism aspire to be an Azad or a Nehru rather than a Beaverbrook or—a Beverley Nichols !

## V

The Indian journalists are keenly conscious of their drawbacks and failings. But playing up crime and vice, corruption and lying are not one hundredth so common in the Indian as they are in the European or American press, whatever Nichols may say. An average pre-war issue of the *British News of the World*, the newspaper with a circulation of more than three million, said to be the largest in Britain, contained eight columns of political and economic news, 18 columns of sports news and as many as 25 columns of news of criminal and passionate interest including matrimonial troubles (divorce, bigamy, abduction), robbery, theft, assaults (including indecent assaults), murder, manslaughter, fraud, false pretences, forgery and blackmail, etc., etc. Compared with this the Indian newspaper is a model of puritanism. It can safely be read in any Convent even on the Sabbath days !

As for corruption, while there are a few black sheep among Indian journalists as anywhere else, the press as a whole has maintained its integrity in a most remarkable manner. The very fact that jour-

nalism is considered a mission has set a high ethical standard. Its political obsession itself has made it sea-green incorruptible where the larger, national interests are involved. It is unthinkable, for example, that the Indian press will ever sell out to India's enemies, as the French press did to the Nazis before the war. A number of Indian journalists have been in the forefront of the national struggle and have courted imprisonment again and again.

Similarly, the Indian press has not yet become the underling of the advertisers: Colgate and Coca Cola do not stalk like a Colossus over its columns as they do in the United States. The editor, and not the business or the advertising manager, is still the boss of the newspaper office in India, even the proprietor having a healthy respect for him. The rotary machines do not revolve to the tune of the big publicity agents. Nor do we worship the fetish of circulation. We care more for our virtues than for our figures. Our newspapers are not produced by office boys for office boys, but by gentlemen for gentlemen—though it must be admitted that these gentlemen are rather dull dogs and need a lot of gingering up.

Nichols who has called us 'the infantile paralytics of world journalism' would have done well to treat the locomotor ataxy from which his own British press has been suffering for a long time now. In the late thirties a large part of Fleet Street had practically become the boot-licker of Hitler and Mussolini, and no journalist licked the dictators' boots cleaner than Beverley Nichols himself.

I present to him the following from the pen of Wickham Steed, a former editor of *The Times*, and one of the foremost living British journalists: "On the early afternoon of Sunday, October 9, 1938, Herr Hitler publicly told Great Britain to mind her own business and not to meddle with Germany's business; and, on pain of German displeasure, he placed his veto upon the return to office of three prominent British public men.

• "When this news was broadcast on the evening of Sunday, October 9, the whole nation was moved to wrath. Of the depth of its wrath hardly a hint was given next morning in the leading British newspapers, some of which were almost apologetic. Enquiry into this humiliating behaviour on the part of our Free Press elicited the information that certain large advertising agents had warned journals for which they provide much revenue that advertisements would be withheld from them should they 'play up' the international crisis and cause an alarm, which was 'bad for trade.' None of the newspapers thus warned dared to publish the names of these advertisement agents or to hold them up to public contempt. And this at a moment when it is of the utmost national importance to unite the country in defence of its freedom and, maybe, of its independent existence . . .

"Of evil counsel there has been no lack during recent years. 'Leading' organs of the British Press have offered it in plenty. It would remain only for them to accept with dutiful submissiveness the claim which Herr Hitler has already put forward, and may

soon renew, that unless the British Government wishes to incur German hostility, it must so control British newspapers as to prevent them from taking exception to anything Herr Hitler may say or do.”<sup>1</sup>

## VI

And lying! It was not an Indian newspaper which fabricated the Zinoviev Letter, to help the Tories to win an election. It was not an Indian journalist who cooked up Bolshevik atrocity stories under a Riga dateline. It was not an Indian war correspondent who betrayed the trust of General Eisenhower and broke the news of the surrender of Germany in May 1945. It is not Indian newspaper offices which maintain Sob Sisters or Scandal Bureaus. And, finally, Upton Sinclair wrote a study not of Indian but American journalism in *The Brass Check*.<sup>2</sup>

Nor, may I add, is it an Indian author who has written *Verdict On India*, which has surely established the all-time high of lying! Somehow lying comes natural to many British journalists—and even a few American ones—when it comes to India. Particularly where Gandhi and the Congress are concerned, no lie is so low, no falsehood so far-fetched, no scandal so grotesque, no cartoon so obscene as not to pass muster in certain sections of the British and American press.

<sup>1</sup> *The Press*, pp. 249-50.

<sup>2</sup> The title was adapted from the brass check (token) which in certain American towns a customer had to present to the particular prostitute he visited.

The *Sunday Dispatch* of London enlivened its report of the *Quit India* meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in August 1942 by bringing in a troupe of dancing girls on the Congress rostrum "to sing and dance to the Congressmen." The same paper published a dispatch from the same reporter (who happens to be the chief assistant, and occasionally acting editor of a leading Anglo-Indian paper, and, of course a pucca British journalist) describing a reception accorded to Gandhi on his arrival in Bombay. The lie, which beats any of Baron Munchausen's hollow, lay in the tail of the message :

"After 15 minutes, when the platform had virtually emptied, a frail, wizened, bare-footed little woman dressed in a home-spun cotton sari peered timidly from the window of the same carriage. Unnoticed by anybody she gathered up her bedding roll and started walking three miles towards Birla House, the sumptuous hostel where Mahatma Gandhi was to stay. This was Gandhi's wife Kastur Ba, and the incident was symbolic."

Just imagine how Nichols would have hopped mad on his one sound foot if an Indian journalist had concocted such a damnable falsehood about Mrs. Churchill or Mrs. Roosevelt. *Hindu* . . . *Hindu* . . . he would have spluttered !

The British journalist does not hesitate to fall foul even of a fellow-Britisher, if he or she happens to espouse the cause of Indian nationalism. The *Daily Sketch* of London had no compunction in describing Gandhi's disciple Mira Ben (Miss Madeline Slade, the



daughter of a British Admiral,) in a headline of its issue, dated August 5, 1942, as "English Woman, Gandhi's Jap Peace Envoy." This should be a sufficient sample of British journalistic ethics and regard for truth. For the American brand I may refer the reader to Sinclair's *The Brass Check* and any Hearst newspaper. The more you rub the charcoal, the blacker it becomes, as the phrase goes.

Nichols has described an ugly cartoon about Linlithgow and Jinnah, which 'a young Hindu editor' showed to him. It certainly seems to have been in vulgar taste, but then there have been a hundred more ugly and vulgar cartoons of Gandhi published by the British and American press during the last five years. Gandhi shaking hands with Quisling. Gandhi depicted as a dog with a bone in his mouth. Gandhi handing over the keys of India to Tojo. An American oomph girl stark naked save for her garters with the legend below: "My Sex Life, by Mahatma Gandhi"! Gandhi a cross between Marshal Petain and Marquis de Sade!

## VII

This chapter is becoming longer than expected and we have space only to discuss the alleged freedom of the Indian press. The Britisher grows in the faith that the liberty of the press is the palladium of all his rights. The American is guaranteed that liberty by the First Amendment to the Constitution. The Indian journalist soon learns that freedom is the last

thing that emerges out of the maze of Laws and Ordinances with which he is enmeshed.

To begin with, there are the all-embracing provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code, which don't distinguish between the tinker, tailor, cobbler and newspaperman. Then there are the Customs, Post Offices and Registration of Books Acts. It was presumably under the omnibus provisions of these Acts, that thirty copies of my last book *Churchill's Blind-Spot: India*, addressed to leading public figures in Britain and America, were confiscated, though the list was headed by Premier Churchill himself. When we have negotiated all these, there is the Princes Protection Act and the Press Emergency Act—the 'emergency' being a chronic malady of the Indian press! Then there are the Defence of India Rules, which are a special war measure, and the Press Instructions which put these rules into practice in the most comprehensive manner possible.

The District Magistrates constitute the Czars of the Press and there are more than two hundred such Czars dotted all over the country. They act as the spirit moves them, and their word is final. They can coolly defy the so-called Gentleman's Agreement which has been evolved between the All-India Editors' Conference and the Government of India. One District Magistrate ordered two leading papers to submit all press matter to the scrutiny of a sub-inspector of police—who, if one knows one's policemen, was as

much qualified to do such a highly technical job as a rabbit.

Another Czar ordered the local telegraph office to forward all press telegrams for his approval, though by the time he had decoded and censored the telegrams, the news was likely to be dead as mutton. A third one, when instructed by the Bombay Government to destroy all objectionable literature seized from the Navjivan Press, which publishes Gandhi's books and journals, executed the order so thoroughly, that he burnt all the old files of *Harijan* (the famous weekly edited by Gandhi) right from 1933 ! It was not the Nazis alone who enjoyed literary bonfires !

“ Few countries have suffered in the past and still continue to suffer more than India from systematic and purposeful distortion, perversion and choking of news channels.” This is how Mr. Brelvi, the President of the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference, described the position of the Indian press in his presidential address early this year. (For the enlightenment of Nichols I repeat that Mr. Brelvi is not a Hindu but a Muslim, and is known to weigh his words very carefully.)

News in India is born in bondage, it is distributed in bondage, and it is printed in bondage—even the size of type for the headlines being prescribed at times by the executive ! In every democratic country the press has the inherent right to publish the proceedings of the legislature, which are considered to be privileged. The situation is not without doubt in India. Similarly judicial proceedings are held to

be privileged with certain minor exceptions. The Punjab Government, however, prohibited the publication of the High Court proceedings in the Habeas Corpus petitions presented on behalf of three distinguished Congress detenus. And to give the final totalitarian touch, the publication of the prohibitory orders itself is prohibited !

*Thou art prohibited to publish that thou are prohibited to publish !*

### VIII

Then there is the blanket censorship of all news and views going out and coming in. Most of these censors are bored, timid civilians—often brought back from the retired list—or military officers, who are given supposedly soft billets on some ground or other. In neither case are they qualified newspapermen, trained for the vitally important job they are entrusted with. They know only one rule of journalism, which is the first and last for them : *When in doubt, cut out !* They do not realize that doubt does not cover either the density of one's head or the coldness of one's feet. No wonder then that the blue-pencil and the scissors work overtime in India.

The *raison d'être* of war-time censorship is military security. To that everything else is rightfully subordinated. But in India there is not even a pretence that censorship is imposed on military grounds. It is frankly political. The news that people were dying like flies in Bengal in 1943 was prevented from

reaching Britain and America, for many months, not because it would have affected the war against Japan, but because it affected the face of the high-placed bureaucrats in New Delhi and Calcutta ! But here I cannot do better than quote the personal experience of an American war correspondent, Eric Sevareid, who has travelled a lot around the world during the last few years :

“ I stopped off in New Delhi on the way. British and American military censors would pass no copy, describing the amazing social life that went on in this headquarters town—‘because we would be criticized.’ Full reporting of India’s political problem was out of the question. To try it meant distressing personal quarrels with petulant civil officials who fumed and bridled over every line of one’s copy. I found they took their politics very personally in India.

“ One Brigadier Jehu,<sup>1</sup> the press chief, since sacked by Mountbatten, saw that no invitations to press conferences or cocktail parties went out to pro-Nehru correspondents. American military offices turned over to the British all American dispatches which dealt with British or Indian affairs in any degree. The American public has lost all interest in the affairs of India—which is what officialdom was aiming for—partly because nobody has been able to tell the whole truth about India.

“ I knew from my experience in London that the people of the British Isles had always had a generous,

<sup>1</sup> At present (August 1945) the editor of *The Times of India*, Bombay.

full account of America's part in the war. In India, however, it was deliberately played down. American victories became 'Allied' victories in the headlines, and events such as a Harlem race riot received top billing. Reuter's enjoyed a virtual monopoly as the news service for India, and the situation was so bad that Elmer Davis, I am told, finally had to protest to Halifax. I'm talking only about British India, mind you, not about Britain . . .

"Then I discovered that the hand of the New Delhi censor was on my shoulder even after leaving India. By arrangement with the American military in Chungking any copy by any American reporter which dealt with far-off India had to be given to British officers in Chungking for approval. If you went back to New Delhi and wrote about China, your stuff had to be passed by the Chinese Commissioner there."<sup>1</sup>

The Indian press free! Oh—that was a good one . . . that was rich . . . You must tell your friends . . . You must tell that to the horse-marines, Nichols!

<sup>1</sup> *The Nation* (New York), April 14, 1945.

## CHAPTER XVII

### AN AESTHETE AT LARGE

THOUGH Nichols did not call his book *Heil Hindu*, as he originally intended, he has used the word *Hindu* with consummate skill. As we have seen, in his hand everything Indian which he wanted to damn automatically became Hindu, whether it was a Hindu goddess or a Muslim film actress.

This was an excellent ruse from every point of view. In the first place, this subtle distinction between Hindus and others gave him an air of impartiality. It is a verdict on India, *not* on Hindus, and if all the villains of the piece happen to be Hindus, well, it couldn't be helped. The judge had to give his verdict without fear or favour.

From the British propaganda point of view, this highlighting of the differences between Hindus, Muslims and others was most useful, as it was bound to incite communal passions. "Divide and Rule" is a well-thumbed Imperial maxim. It is through his fictitious Muslim visitors that Nichols opens his onslaught upon the Hindu religion. It is through Ambedkar that he first attacks Gandhi. And it is through the British "pucca sahib" that he introduces us to the "half-caste" Anglo-Indian! All this is as subtle as it is mischievous, and we have seen how even an enlightened person like Mr. Frank Anthony reacted to it.

Nichols's use of the word *Hindu* has, from the British propaganda view-point, a still more long-range effect. It is not so well known in this country that "our American friends" call all Indians *Hindu*, irrespective of their caste or creed. So Nichols's indictment of the Hindus is likely to pass as the indictment of all Indians in the eyes of the average American reader of *Verdict On India*! This is a development for which the British Information Services in America are not likely to be sorry in the least!

We thus see how fruitful Nichols's visit to India proved to be: (1) *Verdict On India* threw one more apple of discord between Hindus and Muslims. (2) In Britain, it convinced Mr. and Mrs. Smith that it was indeed a White Man's Burden—almost a Cross—they were bearing in India, and that the ungrateful Indians themselves were solely responsible for the various ills they were suffering from. (3) And, finally, "our American friends" were "enlightened" upon the real nature of the Indian problem, and reassured about the way Britain was handling it. Even so well-informed a newspaper as the *New York Times* welcomed Nichols's book as "full of provocative thoughts and vivid images," and expected that it would become a best seller in the States!

It was most significant that the heading of the two-column review given to it by the *New York Times* was "*Hindu versus Muslim*." It is only fair to point out, however, that the more serious American weeklies saw clearly through Nichols's game. The *Nation*



condemned his book as "a magnified and more vitriolic *Mother India*," and wrote: "The volume deserves careful reading, if only to learn how an intellectual proceeds to rationalize the position of a ruling power that fears its days may be numbered." *Common Sense* dismissed Nichols in a single sentence as "an English author with a slick style and sly mind."

## II

In the foregoing pages we have examined both the slick style and the sly mind at some length, and this study must come to an end now. There is space to deal only with a few odds and ends like art and music and the cinema—the A's with which Nichols has embroidered his *Verdict*. Normally, these subjects do not lend themselves to political propaganda and they can be discussed from a purely æsthetic point of view. Nichols, however, carries his divide-and-damn technique even to those spheres. He tries to make religious and political capital even out of paint and celluloid. Added to this is his tendency to draw "reckless and sometimes fatuously ignorant generalizations," which the *Punch* had criticized long ago.

For example, Nichols calls the Indian cinema "Hindu Hollywood." It is no more "Hindu" than its prototype in America is "Christian Hollywood." It is utterly cosmopolitan in its composition, character and tastes. It doesn't suffer in the least from religious inhibitions, and our film stars are as

free and easy in their manners as are their brothers and sisters in the west. The Indian cinema has copied a few of the virtues and most of the vices of the American film industry, including its capitalistic outlook, fabulously paid star system, and the divorce hobby. It has its glamour and sex-appeal, its *It* and *Oomph*, and every adolescent Indian has his favourite film idol.

Still, Nichols grouses, they don't kiss! On the screen, he means, and has lingered one and a half pages over this most succulent issue, dragging in the old Abbé Dubois to tell his readers why the Hindus don't kiss! Now, what can you say to this criticism, except that we in India don't do that sort of thing in public? However, if Nichols had referred to Vatsyayana's celebrated *Kamasutra*, he would have found 101 ways of kissing. Unfortunately, all of them are meant to be used strictly *in camera*.

Unlike Nichols, many western visitors are very agreeably impressed by the absence of kissing on the Indian screen. Noel Dainton, well known in the English film and stage world, who toured India with an ENSA troupe some months ago, observed: "In western pictures we have kissing and hugging in love scenes. On the Indian screen this is replaced by the more charming and artistic method of expression through gestures and poetical language and love songs. I personally prefer this to the kissing, hugging and other physical expressions of love making."

Nor is the Indian film industry so religion-ridden or stagnated as Nichols misinforms his readers.

Though it cannot boast of a billion-dollar production or acres of pulchritude, the entertainment fare it provides is of a very high order, considering the Indian tastes and background. True, our pictures are overladen with songs, and too many of them are mythologicals, which tend to make them much of a muchness.

But then our producers, like their opposites elsewhere, worship the great god Box Office and they have to give what their patrons want. Considering that a single picture of this type recently ran non-stop at the same theatre for more than a hundred weeks, in an advanced city like Bombay—which is easily a world record—the producers cannot be said to be far wrong. And, after all, even the ultra-modern Hollywood is still utilizing medieval, rankly superstitious themes as in the *Song of Bernadette*.

Considering that the Indian screen is entirely dependent upon America and Europe for raw film and apparatus, it has made astonishing headway from the technical point of view. The *American Cinematographer*, which is considered to be the most authoritative journal of film technology in the world, paid a high tribute to the technical qualities, especially the process shots of *Sant Dnyaneshwar* (The Boy Saint), while four other Indian pictures were exhibited by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Hollywood, which is itself deemed to be a high honour. Among the interested spectators who expressed their admiration of Indian films was Charles Chaplin, besides a number of directors, stars and

technicians. Other eminent film personalities like Melvin Douglas and George Formby, who happened to visit India recently, have spoken highly about Indian films and their expert opinion counts more than the babbling of Beverley Nichols. To quote Mr. Dainton again :

“ The first Indian picture I saw a few days ago in Calcutta thrilled me beyond words. The direction seemed superb : there were some wonderful camera shots ; and the acting was of a standard I never believed possible in India. The actors appeared to be so natural, and their technique was admirably easy and convincing. I would very much like English and American actors to come out here and study Indian acting.”

One more point. Who told Nichols that authors are paid barely two hundred rupees (about sixty dollars) for the complete scenario and dialogue of a full-length film ? For this is a lie, though that word is being overworked now. Two hundred rupees is the price paid not for complete stories, but for a casual article by the leading film magazines these days. Story-writers can demand anything from 2,000 to 20,000 rupees (600 to 6,000 dollars) according to their standing, and there are instances of utter novices having landed a cheque for five thousand rupees for their very first scenario ! In fact, the Indian film world has become a regular El Dorado for all our good-looking and/or golden-voiced girls and boys as also for the prematurely aged, sour-faced intellectuals.

## III

When it came to music and art, however, Nichols cleverly dropped his communal label though his verdict upon these is not more flattering than upon the other things he studied in this country. It is Indian music and Indian art—neither Hindu nor Muslim, but a happy synthesis of both. There was a Moghul School and a Rajput School of painting and there is at present a Bengal School and a Bombay School but the differences between all these are of technique and ideal—*not* of caste or creed.

Especially in the evolution of Indian music the genius of both has intermingled and created a distinct and majestic pattern. Nichols could not naturally damn it as *Hindu* music when Muslim maestros like Faiyaz Khan and Alladiya Khan are two of its greatest living exponents, nor could he call the “farmyard noises” Muslim music. So he has had to temporise by the use of the word *Indian*, though it is significant that an author who has done his damndest to magnify the minutest difference between the two communities has not had the honesty to admit that music and art are the efflorescence of the *Indian* mind, the common heritage of the Muslims as well as the Hindus.

It is a thousand pities that we should have begun our study of Indian art and music by a discussion not of their æsthetic qualities but of their communal associations. It is like asking whether a sunset painted by Turner was English or Irish, and making the

answer an argument for or against the partition of Ireland! But such is the distorted perspective of *Verdict On India* that even art, architecture and music assume weird and fantastic shapes in the mind of its readers.

Architecture in Bombay, the Gateway of India, is so hideous and depraved, according to Nichols, that even a cursory glance at it is sufficient to send the British visitor home on the next boat! What a pity that it didn't have that effect upon Nichols, the great æsthete, who spent quite a few happy months in this very city, lecturing the thick-skinned Philistines of Bombay and writing his verdict. He told them that their houses were like "a malformed wedding cake" or "a gilded mouse-trap" and deserved to be blown up or turned into "zoos for the more loathsome forms of diseased reptiles."

"The abuse was laid on with a trowel," writes Nichols. "To make it more stinging, it was extremely personal." The Oracle of the hour "roared, hissed, spat in their faces." And still nothing happened. Nobody cared. The Oracle was greeted merely with "bland smiles—amiable little smirks."<sup>1</sup>

The Indian Philistines were too polite to tell the boorish visitor that Bombay is not India. It is almost entirely a British creation and its architectural monstrosities, which made Nichols's nostrils quiver in indignation, were almost without exception designed by British architects. The mongrel structures, combining Gothic, Saracenic, Tudor, Hindu and Muslim

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, pp. 108-9.

styles with a dash of Louis Seize, which greet the visitor from the Gateway of India to the old Government House at Parel (now occupied by the Haffkine Institute of Science which really *does* house a number of loathsome reptiles !), were conceived by the geniuses who came here from South Kensington.

The destinies of the Indian schools of art and architecture were guided until lately by second-rate British artists—obviously only such artists would be available for a job which is more administrative than creative. It must be gratefully admitted though that men like Havell, Percy Brown and Griffiths contributed a great deal to the revival of Indian art. But even when a genius like Edwin Lutyens came to India, he sacrificed artistic beauty to Imperial glory in designing the neolithic piles of buildings in New Delhi.

However, I have no desire to enter here upon a dissertation on Indian architecture. Suffice it for us to stand before the temples in South India, or the Taj Mahal, or the majestic wilderness of Fatehpur Sikri, or the rugged ramparts of an old Rajput fort, to know all that is worth knowing about Indian architecture. I would only like to assure my fellow-citizens in Bombay, including the polite Philistines, that they are in good company. For this first city in India was not the first to receive the abuses of an ill-bred critic. Oxford also appears to be “one of the ugliest cities in the world,”<sup>1</sup> in the eyes of Nichols.

<sup>1</sup> *News of England*, p. 148.

And London, the Imperial metropolis, is "the ugliest capital in the world . . . It is a nasty mess."<sup>1</sup>

It almost seems the trade secret of Beverley Nichols to abuse the architecture of whatever place he visits in order to advertise what a great critic he is. There was only one exception—Italy. Not the old Italy with its cathedrals, palaces, art galleries and its majestic ruins, which served as the first inspiration of every lover of beauty and the journey's end of every world tourist. *See Naples and die!* No, Nichols was impressed not with the old, but the new Italy—Mussolini's Italy. Listen :

"The architecture of the Fascist régime is tense as the muscles of a fighter's arm. It is consciously tense, too : there is a quality of drama in it . . . The architecture (of a square in Brescia) was electric with energy. Stark columns thrust themselves up with a power that can only be called phallic . . . "<sup>2</sup>

We MUST stop here.

#### IV

Indian art, according to Nichols, is a blank wall, Which perhaps explains why it inspired him to scribble on it a lot of nonsense like an urchin ! Nobody is more conscious of the poverty of modern Indian art than the Indians themselves. Indian scholars and critics have freely admitted it, and they have also explained the causes due to which art in this country has fallen on evil days. After all the culture of a

<sup>1</sup> *News of England*, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.



country cannot be divorced from its political or economic background, and if Indian art is backward to-day, it is not because the Indian people lack artistic susceptibilities or creative abilities. A distinguished art critic, who read this chapter, said to me bitterly: "Tell Nichols that if he wanted to see modern Indian art, he should have visited India a hundred and fifty years ago. Since then all our artistic progress has stopped—thanks to the British rule! If Indian art is alive to-day at all, it is solely because of its imperishable heritage."

Nichols writes that he traversed the whole length and breadth of India in search of an artist—or rather in search of a modern, original artist—and found none—except Jamini Roy! Indian art consists in slavish imitation of Ajanta or of the French Impressionists. "Time and again we shall find the artists of young India staring fixedly into the past. For them the sun never rises, it only shines as a distant gleam in the gold of the Ajanta draperies. . . They are, of course, fiercely nationalist, they are always shouting 'forward' and they are always looking back."<sup>1</sup>

Now there may be some truth in this remark, but not sufficient to justify the sweeping antithesis. The formalism of the Ajanta, the Rajput and the Moghul schools no doubt dominates many an Indian artist's brush. But that is because the British mentors who dominated Indian academies of art until lately, themselves believed that Indian art consisted only

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 111.

of the Ajanta plus Rajput plus Moghul schools, while the Bengal school, which was the first to liberate itself from western influence, developed a linear formalism of its own, though it had little Bengali about it.

Jamini Roy does not belong to that school, but neither can he be called a modern. He, too, has gone back to the traditional folk art of rural Bengal, whatever experimentations he may have done earlier. As an unkindly critic wrote recently : "The wheels of Jamini Roy's art factory have been roaring incessantly . . . pouring out pictures of the "Pat" brand, the Matisse manner, or Von Gogh veins, like a knife-grinder gone mad." I quote this more in criticism of Nichols's *Verdict* than of Roy's art, of which I am a great admirer. In spite of his stylisation, he does not go after goody-goody grace. "His line has decision and is taut with power."<sup>1</sup>

And whatever one may say of the Moghul or Rajput school, it is absurd to dismiss Ajanta as ancient, even if the frescoes on its walls were painted more than two thousand years ago. In their rhythmic, gay abandon and intense *joie de vivre*, those nameless artists are modern as to-morrow. They suffered no inhibitions, even though their themes were religious, and their setting was the dusky caves cut into mountain sides. Technically it appears almost baffling how these frescoes could have been painted at all, and what secret could have gone into their colours, which are as living to-day as the figures they delineate.

<sup>1</sup> Bishnu Dey and John Irwin, *Jamini Roy*, (Foreword).

“Ajanta is eternally young,” wrote my late colleague and the distinguished art critic Kanaiyalal Vakil. “It attains the childhood of the spirit. The usual tokens lose currency. Useless to explode into adjectives. Useless to recall the ancient date or age of the caves or the paintings. Useless to apply the catch-phrases, which classify and test works of art as so many bottled or tinned specimens.”

To my mind the greatest mistake done by Indian artists was that they copied the line, but left the life in the bat-swept vaults of Ajanta. They mastered the formalism of the old masters, but missed their spirit altogether. But then it was the mistake not only of the artists, but of the Indian people as a whole, who gradually wrapped themselves in a prudish ritualism.

It is foolish, therefore, to decry Ajanta, as Nichols has done. The motto of Indian artists should rather be : Go back to Ajanta—to the *life* of Ajanta ! Imbibe the freedom of those artists, wield the same vigorous brush, seek to recapture the eternal freshness of their colours. Even our actors and actresses, jewellers and modistés can learn something from their frescoes. A Schiaparelli or a Molyneux would certainly be inspired by the exquisite draperies on the full-bosomed figures of Ajanta. They are simply asking to be copied in the salons of Paris and New York. The Ajanta girls seem to have worn almost ultra-modern headgears, a fashion which has completely lapsed in India for two thousand years now.

Like Nichols, I too, believe in art for life's sake.

And that is why I say : let us go back to Ajanta, to the *life* of Ajanta—which means life of yesterday, to-day and to-morrow, and which also includes the death of hundreds of thousands as in the Bengal famine. If our artists cannot paint life like a Renoir or a Picasso, they can at least portray death like a Hogarth or a Goya. A few of them like Chittaprosad and Zainul Abedin have. But, of course, Nichols never heard of them!

## V

All art tends to the condition of music, according to Walter Pater. Therefore, like the faithful æsthete that he professes to be, Nichols has devoted a whole chapter to Indian music. While passing his judgment upon the other “workings of the Indian mind,” Nichols has taken his authority for granted. But when he came to Indian music he felt impelled to say “a word in self-defence.” Music, it appears, was his first love. He could read a full-score before he could read his newspaper, and he thus feels entitled to pass a verdict on Indian music.

He could have added one more autobiographical detail. When he was nine, he told his mother after attending a concert of Melba that she sang exactly like himself! Subsequently, he worked for some time as a secretary of the great singer, though somehow he has forgotten to add this qualification to the list given in his book. Unmusical Indian readers, who remain unimpressed yet, will perhaps sit up with a

jerk when they are told that Dame Nellie Melba was the *prima donna* after whom *peche Melba* was named.

One therefore stands with due humility and respect in the dock to hear the verdict of such a distinguished judge of music. Here it is :

“ Indian music cannot be regarded as a serious art because :

(a) “ Indian music is almost entirely a matter of improvisation.

(b) “ Art is not, never has been, and never can be, a matter of improvisation.”<sup>1</sup>

However this is too tame a verdict for an expert like Nichols. Let us therefore reproduce his clowning comment upon an actual demonstration of Indian music, to which a Maharajah treated him.

“ Instantly, Bedlam was let loose . . . The singer was emitting all the sounds of the slaughter house with incredible gusto and abandon. There was the sound of slaughtered pigs, of neighing horses, and gobbling turkeys, all cascading simultaneously from his lizard throat.”<sup>2</sup>

Indians who take their music seriously will be dumb-founded by this butcherly judgment. I would however ask them to let Nichols well alone. For though he professes to be an authority on music and makes a fatuous show of sincerely trying to understand Indian music, his verdict was passed long before he heard the first Indian *Rag* (melody), which he was too dense to understand anyway.

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 126-27.

"The music of the East," he wrote in 1936—seven years before he came to India—"is like the piping of a tin-whistle compared with the subtlety and range of emotion offered by even the minor European composers."<sup>1</sup> Again, "Harmonically Eastern music is in the crudest stage of development. The idea of comparing the monotonous alterations of common chords and dominants with the subtle texture of European harmony is ludicrous . . . My own feeling is that the great mass of this music is almost worthless and is principally used as an aphrodisiac."<sup>2</sup>

Again, we MUST stop !

## VI

In fairness to the non-Indian reader, however, I must try to give here an idea of Indian music. I cannot do so better than through the words of a western writer, for whatever Walter Pater and Robert Browning might have said, music does not seem to be a universal medium of beauty and truth like painting. It presumably hath charms to soothe a savage breast, as the poet said, but it seems that different kinds of music are needed to soothe different types of savages. We have just seen how one western savage exploded in barbaric expletives after listening to Indian music.

There are a number of books written by Western authors for the serious student of Indian music.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *No Place Like Home*, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> *The Music of Hindostan* by A. F. Fox Strangways (Clarendon Press) is considered to be the standard book on the subject. *The Music of India* by H. A. Popley (Oxford University Press) is a useful handbook for the layman.

The average Englishman and American is unfortunately unable to spare the time for their perusal. Nevertheless, he can gain a broad idea of our music from the following brief appreciation by Leopold Stokowski, the distinguished conductor of the New York Symphony Orchestra, and one of the foremost authorities on music in America :

“ Before I went to India I studied several books on Indian music, but first-hand experience convinced me that Indian music is far more complex and important to world culture than was suggested by the books I had read, although these were well written, with an open mind on the part of the writer. Later I went back to India a second time to continue my study.

“ In India I had the impression of several musical cultures blended into one. The rhythmic basis of Indian music is of great importance, the grouping of rhythmic design lying back of the more prominent melodic features of the music.

“ One of the great characteristics of the music of India to my mind is its flexibility and freedom. While giving due consideration to traditions stemming from the past, Indian music is free and improvised, so that all powers of imagination in the musician are brought into play. In this way, the music of India is always creative, never a mere reproduction of what is written or played, as sometimes happens with the music of western countries. I was struck with the sensitive manner in which various kinds of

music are made, the expression of the mood at certain times of day or night, or certain seasons of the year.

“ Even more striking is the way that every aspect of the music of India is intimately related to every aspect of the life and religious beliefs and cosmic conception of the people of India. I felt that Indian music was never separate from Indian life, but closely interwoven with all the thoughts and feelings of the people of India. In some western countries music is regarded as an art separate and abstract from life. This is never so in India, where music and all the arts and every phase of life are unified and illumine each other, forming part of one great conception of universality of life and existence.”

## VII

“ It is at this point that the book really begins,” wrote Nichols exuberantly while opening his blitz on Indian art and architecture. Now that we have pricked the bubble of his æsthetic pretensions, it would not be a bad idea to say *au revoir* to the reader.

One last word. It appears that after having made as cast-iron a case as he knew how in the first 248 pages of his *Verdict* for the British remaining in this country for keeps, Nichols makes an ostensible and hypocritical pretence in the last eight pages of reconciling himself to their quitting India after all ! On moral grounds, he admits, they must quit—after dividing India.



But *can* they quit—and leave India a prey to all aggressors ?

Besides, there is always the danger of civil war. Even if Pakistan is granted, “it would seem fairly certain that large parts of India would revert to their traditional anarchy. It is inconceivable that all the States would vote themselves out of existence without a fight. It is equally inconceivable that the North-West Frontier would not flare up again in a bonfire of tribal warfare, which might spread far beyond the frontiers.”<sup>1</sup>

Do not the British owe a responsibility to the rest of humanity, even if they leave the Muslims and the Hindus to fight among themselves ? What will happen to the world’s peace if they leave India ?

Really, can they quit ? *Shall* they ? . . . yes . . . no . . . Yes . . . NO !

And suddenly in the last paragraph of his book Judge Beverley Nichols makes up his mind. “There will be one sense in which the British will never quit India, and that is a spiritual sense.” And he flowers into a purple peroration, as every school-boy tries to do at the end of his essay. Even when the British quit, he tells us, they will leave behind the ideals of Milton and Mill, Burke and Gladstone.

“Long after we have left, the students of the future will be opening the golden pages of *Areopagitica*, and thrilling, as all young men should thrill, to the revolutionary music of Shelley. The ghost of Byron

<sup>1</sup> *Verdict On India*, p. 252.

will brood in the quadrangles of universities yet unbuilt . . . ”

Agreed. The ghost of Byron is quite welcome to stay with us, since in life he was hounded out of Britain and died fighting for the freedom of the Greek people, who alas ! are still fighting for it. Shelley also, who was a refugee from genteel British society and whose grave appropriately lies in the Eternal City, may certainly abide with us for ever.

And Milton, too, who wrote not only *Areopagitica* but also the thunderlike *Tenure Of Kings And Magistrates*, justifying—as only a Milton can justify—the right of a people to overthrow its rulers. Nevertheless, I shall not say with Wordsworth—

*Milton ! thou shouldst be living at this hour :*

Not at any rate in India. For had he lived to-day and dared to write his *Tenure Of Kings And Magistrates*, the nearest British magistrate would have sent him to ten years' penal servitude in the name of the King-Emperor.

Let us leave these immortals out of the sordid argument of the *Verdict On India*, for their names are “ an echo and a light unto eternity.”

What will the British rulers really leave behind them when they do quit India at last ? Osbert Sitwell gave the answer years ago—at any rate Nichols himself put the following remark in his mouth<sup>1</sup> :

“ If the British were turned out of India to-morrow, all that would be found is a broken-down bathroom and an empty whisky bottle ! ”

<sup>1</sup> Beverley Nichols, *Are They The Same At Home ?* p. 218 (Florin Edition.)



## APPENDIX

### NICHOLS VISITS MRS. NAIDU

(*A Letter to the Author from Dr. N. M. Jaisoorya, M.D., Eldest Son of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu*)

HYDERABAD (DECCAN)

MY DEAR JOG,

You wanted my reply regarding Beverley Nichols's observations about my family and, incidentally, my poor self in his, at present, best seller and thriller called *Verdict On India*. While touring in Bihar I read the chapter honouring us with his wisecracks, grinned and forgot all about it. His opinions about us don't matter two hoots. We remain what we are and don't depend for our future on his or anyone else's opinions. However, since you have asked me for my opinion of the events, and on Beverley's performance in general, I am giving it for what it is worth.

The surprising thing is that I had to hunt for a copy of this "best seller." Hardly one in Hyderabad thought it worth buying and keeping. Scores of my friends had borrowed a copy, read a few chapters and returned it "with thanks." The unkindest cut of all is that I had to buy the last solitary copy moping its life out in one of the bookshops, and that, too, to read the funny remarks about me and my family. I've done it for your sake.

It is difficult to discuss a book that is more subjective than objective. It is useless to talk horse sense to a woman who backs a horse at the races, not because she knows the difference between a race horse and a donkey, but because "the jockey's blouse was, on my deah, such a gorgeous blue." Nichols says he came as a newspaper correspondent. I was for several years the Central European Correspondent for some papers, and I know something of serious reportage. Compare the classic form of reportage of men like Shirer, Douglas Reid, Egon Kisch, C. Z. Kloeetzel, Louis Fischer, Paul Scheffer, Edgar Snow and others with what Nichols calls reportage. That would be enough to show that Nichols is unfit for this kind of work.

You say his book has had wide sales in Britain and America and that it has also been reproduced in a condensed form by *The Reader's Digest*, with its circulation in millions, thus creating an unfavourable impression of India among American readers. I have known hundreds of Americans on the Continent for over ten years and I cannot imagine them to be so gullible as to swallow all this balderdash, however neatly it be put over. Possibly the new American generation may not remember an old saying in the West: "Beware of the horns of a bull, the fangs of a dog and the smile of an Englishman."

No doubt, experience has shown that a lie in the shape of propaganda, however crude, once started, takes six months and more to disprove and undo the damage it has done; like the spurious "Zinoviev letters" trotted out by the British Tories. So even a high class British party like the Tories is not above stooping to dirty work. In India we have our own dear little Tottenham and the priceless Firoze Khan Noon with his moonshine.

But since we have decided to tear little Beverley to pieces, we might as well do it thoroughly once and for all, and show him up as a bungler even in the gentle art of British propaganda. As an example, compare the crude and visible propaganda in the British film "The Lion Has Wings" with the excellent artistic American attempts "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" and "Hitler's Children." The latter were masterpieces because no attempt was made at exaggeration.

Even if Nichols was out here on his own for study and reportage, one thing is definite: he was physically, intellectually and emotionally unfit for this kind of work which needs very robust men both in mind and body, well-trained and well-informed, able to pick and choose from a mass of data what is relevant. First according to his own admission, a mere undramatic shoe-bite or shoe-nail piercing his heel, threw little Beverley into a mighty septic state which took him an infernally long time to recover from. To physically normal people this would be a mere flea-bite. My old worn-out sandals have driven nails into my heels a dozen times during my trek through the villages, and I was neither romantically palanquined, stretchered nor mothered by two

nurses for a day, let alone the time Beverley needed to go into languorous convalescence.

Beverley's delicate body does not harbour a robust mind, even though it is undeniable that delicate bodies can harbour brilliant erratic minds like that of Pope, Edgar Poe, D. H. Lawrence, or Oscar Wilde. But a reporter needs robust common-sense, cold accuracy in collecting and collating data and drawing proper conclusions. Though it may need imagination, it is not the calling for languid lilies that lie abed a year from a mere shoe-bite. I am speaking with knowledge and authority because I have for several years made a study of constitution and character at some of the best institutes in Europe.

Nichols was out of place in this roaring, sweltering restless land smouldering like a volcano, full of ideological and emotional strife, baffling and repulsive in its chaos of frustrations trying to find expression. Experienced level-headed observers like Kloetzel, Shirer and Hurlimann told me in Europe that India puzzled and frightened them; it was too bizarre, the myriad problems seething and boiling like in a cauldron, too difficult to analyse.

In a hundred and fifty years of foreign yoke, India has become one vast maze of slums and dead-end alleys filled with cess-pools and dust-bins and a humanity uprooted; and it does not need Thompson and Garrat, Will Durant, Blount, Cotton or the *Cambridge History of India* to tell us that. Men wishing to investigate into this squalid abscess that is India, poisoning the world, threatening the liberty of all Asia, must be prepared to wade into it with rugged gum boots and noses that can stand the stench of the morgue.

This is no place for delicate lady-like persons, playing at social work in the slums, literally wrapping their skirts around them and gingerly treading their way through the mire and filth holding the smelling salt bottle to their quivering nostrils. And India to-day is certainly not the place for literary darlings from Mayfair, nervous and high-strung like Almachus in Harré's *Behold The Woman*. They would better adorn the Cafe Royale or the "El Dorado." We in India have no illusions about the sorry state of things we are facing. We know too that we shall have to go through it with "tears and sweat and toil," if need be, also

through blood, and we know, too, that, as men, we may have to face even chaos because in it is seething life seeking rebirth, rather than frowst in the putrid stagnation of a monster graveyard "under the protective Imperial shield."

And of all people here comes a dilettante of a pronounced egoist type, and wants to pass a "Verdict" based on his own subjective impressions. Had he titled his book "Entirely my own honest and personal opinions of India—The highly original work of a crazy pavement artist!", I would have replied: "By all means keep them, little brother, you're sure entitled to hold your own opinions, however daft they be." But "Verdict" implies the weighing of pros and cons and the ability and qualifications to do so. And who appointed Nichols as judge in our affairs? The British Government?

*A few inaccuracies:* But Lord help us, the whole book is full of them! I am put down as an "Ayurvedic Doctor" with a black beard. Accurate observation is not Beverley's strong point. My beard is of the pepper and salt brand, more salt than pepper. Unlike the prisoner of Chillon, it grew white in a single night, in a Nazi prison camp at Spandau, the night after the Reichstag fire, when I heard shots being fired in the courtyard throughout the night, the helpless cries for help as anti-Fascists fell before improvised firing squads, men being taken indiscriminately to be shot, when law had vanished and the promised "night of long knives" ran amok for two days and nights before it was stopped, and I saw the bodies of four of my German friends riddled with bullets and faces smashed gory with jackboots. My beard has not turned black since then.

Secondly, I am not an "Ayurvedic Doctor" but have the misfortune to be a fully qualified Allopath, a member of that gang of thugs that is glorified by Cronin in *The Citadel*. I was a prize scholar under Schaefer at Edinburgh, found clinical teaching there very inferior and that Edinburgh was living on its past medical glory. Subsequently I studied at various German universities for ten years, took first class in 13 out of 14 subjects, was offered a research post in bacteriology under Bieling at Frankfurt, which I declined, and wisely refused three offers of a job in Hyderabad State.

So I am, after all, not such a poor sap as little Beverley imagines. I was a fool, however, to try to explain to him, because he professed great interest in it, the difficult theories of Ayurveda. I am not prepared to answer whether Nichols is a fool or a knave. Perhaps he is both. I told him that I was trying to study the problems of Ayurveda, and that as scientists we must learn to separate the wheat from the chaff. Which Ayurvedic Institute did Nichols visit? Had he genuinely wanted to see a good one I could easily have mentioned Panvel, Ahmednagar or Gondal. But the suspicion increases that Nichols is not truthful.

That he could not follow my line of argument is understandable. Between swallowing "slippery cucumber sandwiches" and understanding the exposition of a subject as difficult as the relation of Millikan's cosmic rays to molecular physiology, he would have been wiser to stick to the sandwiches; for it requires, as I see now, more scientific brains than his, to understand technical details. Persons like him are usually not strong in mathematics and science but excellent in literature. Let us have a copy of his school record.

It is a foolish thing to talk on scientific matters, even on "Mumbo-Jumbo" Ayurveda, without knowing anything about them. Recently two fossilised old Surgeons-General in India received a slap in their faces when a "quack" offered to floor both of them in their own pharmacology, and they deserved it. We whose misfortune it is to have to deal daily with syphilis, or anything medical for that matter, are not so cocksure about treatment with arsenic or anything else, nor are we so convinced of the efficacy of "modern medical treatment" as an ignorant Beverley is. This does not exclude the "wonder drug" Penicillin, hailed to-day by the enthusiastic lay press as a cure of all ills the flesh is heir to, as once Salvarsan was. Just at present I have two cases referred to me where Penicillin has failed where it should have succeeded.

On page 201, Nichols cynically tries to prove my congenital idiocy in my trying to offer him a copper plate as a prophylactic against cholera, and quotes a British Doctor who prefers blotting paper. I do not wish to criticise my colleagues, but an ignoramus should not comment on things he does not know. For after all, no one can know everything of the vast medical science. Beverley



has a genius for choosing wrong 'uns as guides, philosophers and friends. This precious sample of a British doctor knows even less than I do, and certainly much less than J. H. Clarke of Edinburgh, who, as Sir John Wier, the private physician to the King of England, can testify, was no bumsucker.

In my Bihar tour, I convinced myself that cholera was more effectively treated by Ayurveds and homœopaths than the recent cholera epidemic in Calcutta by his British doctor friends, whose knowledge of the treatment of cholera is equal to that of the Government of India expert, who admitted over the radio that he knew of no treatment for this disease as late as December 1944. On the contrary, world statistics and the British Parliament can fully testify to the effective treatment of cholera by homœopathy.

It is useless pressing the point further. If at any time mediocre British doctor friends of Beverley's want any further information for their education in medicine, I can give them enough material to keep them profitably busy for the rest of their lives. Further, I hold no brief for Ayurveda. It has its merits though there is no doubt that it has declined and that its present followers in a majority have not understood its scientific principles which are surprisingly supported by results of modern research.

If the only cure is in the abolition of Ayurveda, why not apply the same argument to all religions; why not all of us turn amiable agnostics and atheists? We have seen the result of nineteen hundred years of Christianity in Europe, a monster graveyard with the destruction of all human achievements, and the reign of jungle law, all in the name of the gentle pacifist Christ. But since I cannot by any stretch of imagination consider a delicate individual like Nichols, with his gush for dahlias, daffodils and Siamese cats, a philosopher in spite of his "Philosophical Essays" comparable to Aldous Huxley, Joad, Russel, etc., further discussion serves no purpose.

Is Nichols a gentleman? It would seem that our beast of a Siamese cat interested him more than we did. Very likely we are bores. More likely that two feline natures attracted each other; for most of his book reads like the backchat of a malicious old cat or *Klatschweib*. We are bores and yet he begged my mother to allow him to call again because ours was the only house where

he felt he was understood. In other people we would call such behaviour that of a cad.

If we should generalise like Beverley, we would say all Englishmen are cads, which we know they are not. We shall always welcome decent Englishmen as friends in spite of our frank anti-imperialist views, because most decent Englishmen themselves are anti-imperialist. We may detest British national hypocrisy which is notorious, but that is no bar to friendship with individual Britishers.

*Famine in Bengal.* Read the Rowland Committee and Woodhead Reports. Woodhead is no blockhead, and the Bengal famine was by no means an "act of God" as Nichols and "monkey face" Amery proclaimed to the world. What naiveté to quote an Indian employee of the Food Control Department! Again the feminine trait in Nichols. *Oh my dear, but George told me so.*

I have not been bitten by the art bug; but let us confess that we have no modern art worth spouting about. What is more, none of us, except some of our native comprador bourgeoisie, have the time for art for art's sake. We are worried over the devastating spectacle of mass hunger, mass degradation, abominable sub-human standards, a whole continent has been reduced to, on an unparalleled scale ever known in history; and the cries of the hungry and the naked overtone all Beethoven's and Bruckner's symphonies.

Our Requiems are real compared to Verdi's or Mozart's; for in our ear rings Burke's terrible indictment of Britain: "The cries of India are given to seas and winds to be blown about in every breaking monsoon over a remote and unhearing ocean." That we have no Picassos, Monets, Gogains, Rembrandts, Murillos or Mazareels but anæmic Chughtais and Jamini Roys, doesn't matter; neither has England.

Our music shall begin when we can dance and sing our own Carmignole, nor can any art ever reproduce the gigantic panorama of the tragedy in Bengal or portray, what is more terrible, our exploitation, political and economic. "There is nothing before the eyes of the natives but an endless, hopeless prospect of new flights of birds of prey and passage with appetites continually renewing for a food that is continually wasting." (Burke's Impeachment of Warren Hastings.)

*And Pakistan!* This chapter was a treat, a regular romancero. I myself subscribe to the excellent spirit in the Constitution of the United States which, in essence, upholds "the sacred right of everybody and everything to stew in their own juice." But why all this melodrama in this chapter? Like a gushing young thing that met her operatic hero, "mutual rapture thrilled their eyes, equal was their hidden worth," and little Beverley was "not even angry" that the "Asiatic Giant" kept him waiting.

And after many dramatic gags and spotlighted dialogues like in Woccek's *Danton's Death* the Finale is rung down in high crescendo in genuine Wagnerian *furor teutonicus*, with the blonde heroine nestling her comely head close to the starched shirt front of the "Asiatic Giant," shrieking ecstatically *Give me Pakistan, darling, or I'll die.*

For your sake, Jog, I have patiently waded through Nichols's balderdash (paying for it), half grinning and half wondering how such a silly book could be written. The American public may think of it what it likes. It won't alter facts or our future destiny which lies in our hands.

One thing strikes me as a wonderful achievement of "Mumbo-Jumbo" Ayurveda. An old Bengali doctor offered Nichols a bottle of aphrodisiac (see page 147 of *Verdict*), which would have solved all his problems. By Gad, wasn't that just wonderfully correct diagnosis? What a pity he didn't take it before writing *Verdict On India*. It would have given little Beyerley a more manly view of things, and not kept him what he is—a malicious and spiteful old cat. And so *Goodbye to all that!*

Yours sincerely,  
N. M. JAISOORYA.





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